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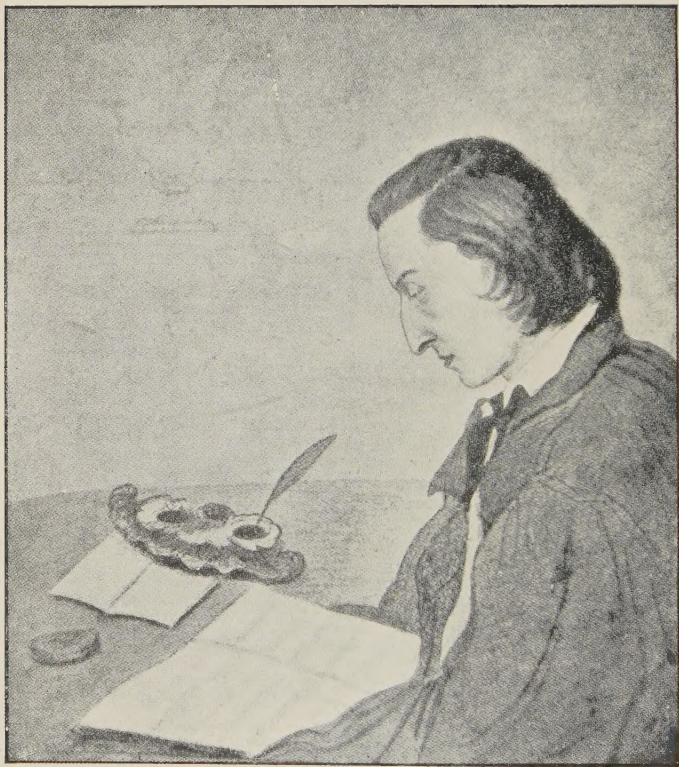
THEIR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN, WHO WERE STUDENTS HERE,
MADE THIS PRESENTATION IN 1958

Walter H. H. H.



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THE NIGHTINGALE



FREDERIC CHOPIN

From a Drawing by George Sand.

THE NIGHTINGALE

(A LIFE OF CHOPIN)

BY
MARJORIE STRACHEY

WITH FRONTISPIECE

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FRONTISPIECE

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THE NIGHTINGALE

O Nightingale, thy voice is sweet,
Still, after many years, we listen here,
Still we hear, when the day is over,
Thou art the only one who can
Sing, with its sweet voice, all the
Day, with its sweet voice, all the

To
J. M. S.

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WARSAW

*Thou faery voyager, that dost float
In such clear water that thy boat
May rather seem
To brood on air than on an earthly stream ;
Suspended in a stream as clear as sky
Where earth and heaven do make one imagery. . . .*

WORDSWORTH.

CHAPTER I

WARSAW

I

THREE children were standing at the window, their faces all turned up to the sky.

"I shall be the first to see it," said Louise firmly, pushing Frycek a little to one side, to improve her own position.

"But *I* saw it first last year," said Isabella, digging her elbow into his other side.

"Perhaps Frycek will be the first to-day?" suggested a low voice from the other end of the room; but Frycek had already abandoned the struggle, and leaving the window to his sisters came quietly towards the last speaker.

The room was lighted by candles in sconces round the walls. A big round table obviously meant to be in the middle of the room, was this evening pushed to one side out of the way. In one of the corners was the long brown piano at which Mamma was sitting. On the floor, near the white porcelain stove lay Baby.

Frycek, himself not yet five, was already tired by the excitement of a day not nearly over. Christmas Eve visitors, carols, dancing and anticipations had brought a bright pink spot into each cheek, and added a sparkle to his gay eyes. Isabella and Louise were looking for the Star, and the moment they saw it, supper—the Star Supper—would be ready. And, after supper . . . he didn't quite know what . . . wonderful things . . . an Old Man with a white beard . . . perhaps more music——

"Frycek," said Mamma, still sitting at the piano and holding out her arms. He ran into them and laid his silky head against her. Mamma had a special feeling for her only son, which she justified to herself by saying things were always a little hard on a deposed baby—a fact of which she perhaps had not been so conscious when it had been Isabella who was deposed. Certainly Frycek was not sorry for himself. Emily was a darling; Louise and Isabella wonderfully clever and good. And then there was marvellous, beautiful Mamma, with her soft voice and white fingers . . . and finally the long brown piano from which came sounds . . . music. He leant up against her looking at the black and white keys; presently, with her arms still around him she began to play—and then to sing.

What was there about that tune that always made him cry? It was a pretty tune—Louise said it was very pretty—and yet, it was a strange thing, whenever Mamma played it he couldn't help crying.

Just as the two large tears welled over on to his cheeks the door opened and Papa came in. At the same moment there came two shrieks from the window.

"There! look! I see it!" cried Louise; and the more collected and efficient Isabella:

"The Star! The Star!"

They both turned from the window and rushing to Papa exclaimed with one voice:

"I saw it first!"

Louise, shocked at having her rights of primogeniture disputed, repeated decidedly:

"No, Isabella, *I* saw it first."

Isabella hesitated a moment and then said rather tentatively:

"But I *said* 'The Star,' first."

Papa laughed.

"As a matter of fact *I* saw it first—from upstairs in the schoolroom—and came to tell you that the supper is ready."

The laughter, the shouts and all the sounds of merriment had covered a little mute interlude at the piano. Mamma had seen the wet on Frycek's cheeks and stroked them tenderly with her cool fingers, looking at him with a silent question. He felt her sympathy and smiled reassuringly; then, quite brought back to earth by his father's and sisters' voices, he pulled eagerly at her hand.

"Come along, Mamma! It's the Star Supper!"

At the back of the room were two large folding doors leading to the dining-room. Papa on one side and Jadwiga on the other threw them open, and while Papa came to lead Mamma in, the three children gazed in admiration. Three candlesticks each with five candles on the table! And two more on the sideboard! The table and sideboard both covered with things to eat, amongst which one could only pick out ginger-cakes and oranges! Jadwiga in her best dress, with three strings of coral round her neck and looking, with all her puffy petticoats, at least three times fatter than usual!

"Come, children," said Papa, looking back over Mamma's hand, which he had been kissing; and they all walked in to supper, Jadwiga slipping in after them with Baby in her arms.

When Frycek got to his place he found there was something under the white cloth, and began tugging at it. It appeared to be dry grass; and it was great fun to pull it all out. But suddenly Louise saw him, and called in a loud voice:

"Frycek! You naughty boy! That is the hay for our Saviour's birth!"

To Frycek the sharp attack was like a cold douche and then he felt the eyes of everyone on him. He turned scarlet, and the corners of his mouth began to droop; but Mamma said quickly to Louise:

"He's not naughty; he's too small to know about the hay in the manger; we'll tell him about it to-morrow."

"Yes, Frycek," said Papa, "to-morrow you shall hear about the little boy who was born in a stable among the oxen and the hay——"

"I know, Papa," cried Frycek, quite recovered, "it was Jesus Christ, wasn't it?"

"Yes. Now, hush. Here comes Jadwige with the wafer."

Papa stood up holding in his hand something thin and white. He began to speak, and spoke for what seemed a long time, but Frycek did not listen to what he was saying—only noticed a word here and there—"God" . . . "peace" . . . "birthday" . . . "friends far away." . . . Then Papa broke off a piece of the thin stuff and gave some to Mamma and then put a piece in his own mouth. Then he gave a piece to Louise, another to Isabella, and in a moment was holding out a bit to Frycek. It was very thin—almost like paper—but Frycek put it in his mouth; and there were his mother and Isabella holding out bits to him. He ate them and the bit Jadwige offered him. Then he wanted to give some to someone himself. He broke Louise's bit in half and going up to Emily pushed a piece into her mouth. Everyone began to laugh, except Emily who began to cry, and Mamma had to take her on her lap and comfort her.

Then the supper began in earnest. It was quite a business working through all the eleven courses that began with almond soup and ended with dessert. Towards the end Frycek began to feel tired, but he revived when Jadwige put in front of him a great dish piled with poppy-cakes—layers of white poppy seeds and red jam in alternation. At last it was finished. Mamma got up and took the children back into the drawing-room, leaving Papa behind; and when Frycek tried to drag him in too, Louise laughed at him and pulled him away. When the folding doors shut on them he looked round feeling rather strange. Something, he thought, was wrong; wasn't something going

to happen? Mamma began to tell a story and he sat on the floor leaning against her chair, but he couldn't listen; he was thinking all the time about something happening.

Suddenly a door opened, and an old man with a white beard, in a large red dress trimmed with fur appeared in the doorway. The little girls jumped up calling out: "The Star Man! The Star Man!" but Frycek was not sure he liked it. There was something queer about the Man . . . his beard was horrid . . . but then . . . he wasn't sure . . . perhaps it was really Papa . . . but he looked so funny. He looked at Mamma, and she was smiling, like Louise and Isabella. She took his hand, and he felt a little reassured, especially as the Man began by speaking to Louise.

"Well, my child" (he had a funny gruff voice that half frightened Frycek, half made him want to laugh). "Well, my child, have you learnt anything this year, to say or show to the Star Man?"

"A fable," answered Louise, in rather a trembling voice, "a fable by La Fontaine."

"Ah! Recite it then," and the Man sat down on a plush-covered chair.

Louise stood in front of them, put her hands behind her back and began:

"L'Alouette et ses petits, avec le maître des champs."

Frycek did not understand it very well but he knew it was about a Mamma Lark and her little ones, and he thought it was very clever of Louise to be able to repeat French so well. When she had finished, the Man clapped his hands and said:

"Very good, darling." It sounded just like Papa; and Frycek squeezed his mother's hand and whispered, "It's Papa, isn't it?"

"Yes," she whispered back; and by that time Isabella was repeating all the countries of Europe and their capitals.

"Now, Frycek, it is your turn. What have you learnt?"

Frycek was in no doubt about this for Mamma had told him yesterday what to answer. He stood up and came a little forward.

"A Minuet by Mozart," he said.

"Let us hear it," replied the Star Man; and Frycek went to the piano.

He never required any persuasion to do that; and though the Man's white beard did make him feel a little shy, he climbed up on to the seat that enabled him to reach the keyboard, while his legs swung helplessly, and began his Minuet.

Directly the first sound reached his ears he forgot everything but the music, and smiled with pleasure at the sweet melody, and caressed the keys with his small fingers to make them sing even more sweetly still. When it was over he sat a moment enjoying the satisfaction of the close, then scrambling down from his perch ran to Mamma and flung himself into her arms.

"Well, children," said the Star Man at last, "I have brought you some rewards from Star Land for your good conduct." As he spoke he tapped the floor with his stick, the folding doors flew open and the dining-room appeared—but how transformed! how wonderful! how fairy-like! Bright coloured lights, a Christmas tree covered with candles like stars, flowers, paper hangings, parcels—no wonder Louise and Isabella screamed with delight and began dancing round the tree in transports. At first Frycek stayed by Mamma, but presently Isabella came running back and took his hand.

"Come, Frycek!" she cried. "Come and dance around the tree with us!" and Frycek ran off beaming with delight.

.

After the children were in bed Nicolas Chopin and

Justine sat alone in the drawing-room holding each other's hands and smiling like two lovers.

"How well Louise said her fable," said Justine, "she has never said it so well before—I suppose she was excited."

"Yes," replied Nicolas, "her '*ne t'attends qu' à toi seul*' was quite amusing. But, Justine, Frycek does really play wonderfully for his age. He's only five, isn't he?"

"Five in February," said Justine, smiling and sighing. "Yes his playing is beautiful. . . ."

II

THE Chopins lived in a large house—a very large house indeed, which had formerly been the Palace of the Bishop of Warsaw. It was not, however, because they themselves were wealthy people of high position, but because Nicolas had had the idea of adding to their very moderate income by taking in as boarders some of the boys who attended the Warsaw Lyceum or Grammar School. Justine, active, enthusiastic and obliging, had readily fallen in with his suggestion, and certainly did her full share towards making the venture a success.

The house was divided into two parts—one used by the boarders, the assistant master and the servants; the other by the Chopin family and their maid Jadwige. The inhabitants of the two sides were not by any means kept rigidly apart; they had their meals together in the big hall, and often, after the day's lessons were over, the boarders were invited up into Mme. Chopin's drawing-room for tea and dancing. The social graces thus acquired were appreciated by the pupils' parents, while the boys themselves thoroughly enjoyed the sweet biscuits and the fun.

"Shall we have the boys upstairs to-night?" Nicolas asked his wife one Sunday morning in January.

"We have not had any dancing since they came back after Christmas."

"I was just going to suggest it myself," replied Justine smiling; "we baked some cakes yesterday and a whole heap of biscuits, and last week I went to Brzezina's and bought a new Mazurka."

Louise and Isabella were as well pleased as the boys. Two young ladies amongst twenty would-be partners were sure to be made much of, and at these impromptu balls they always had the gratifying sensation of being scrambled for by the whole crowd of pupils.

"I shan't dance with Pruszek to-night," Louise announced suddenly to Isabella.

"Why not, Louise?"

"I'm getting too big. He's only a little boy, after all. I shall dance with Woyciechowski and Stefan."

"So shall I then."

"That's silly, Isabella. Pruszek isn't a bit too small for you; you can't do everything I do."

"I don't see why I shouldn't dance with Woyciechowski if you do."

Louise could not really think why, either. She tossed her head and looked superior.

"And in any case," continued Isabella, gathering courage and arguments as the conversation was prolonged, "he doesn't dance very well. And there are other big boys as well as him—I shall dance with Jedrzejewicz!"

Louise tossed her head again but was really rather relieved that at that moment a diversion was caused by the entrance of Jadwiga with the tea. Frycek, who had been sitting on the floor gazing at the disputants in turn, got to his feet and began to dance an imitation Mazurka of his own, which made both little girls laugh and give him a hug.

"I'll dance with you, Frycek!" exclaimed Isabella,

but Frycek shook his head very decidedly, and wriggled out of his sisters' embrace.

"You know he never *will* dance," said Louise, "I wonder why?"

It was not long before Mamma came in; and then in a moment there was a subdued scuffling and whispering outside the door—stifled laughter, plenty of "Hush's," shuffling feet, and presently a loud "Now, young gentlemen!" Then a dead silence; a pause; the door bursts open and Pan Famski, the assistant master strides in, bowing, at the head of the troop. Mamma, Louise, and Isabella curtsy, Frycek bows, the pupils bow; there is a moment of stiffness; everyone seems shy and awkward; but Mamma allows no time for that; in a moment she is at the piano and her swinging, rhythmic, lively music soon makes them all forget everything but dancing.

All, that is, except Frycek. He disentangled himself quietly from the active throng, and went to Mamma's side; first standing to watch her nimble white fingers, then, a little tired, sitting on the floor at her feet leaning his head against her knees. Papa coming in to join the merry party stood still in the doorway to gaze at the charming picture the little boy made—his long, silky, flaxen hair showing against his mother's dark velvet dress like an aureole behind his pale, angelic face, his parted lips and large brown eyes giving him an expression of serious contemplation, curious to see on the sweet, rounded, childish features.

As long as his mother played—and she played for long—Frycek sat immovably absorbed. At last Papa approached the piano.

"Come now, my love, you have played enough. You must not let these insatiable dancers wear you quite out. . . ."

"Indeed, no, Madame," exclaimed Pan Famski, stopping abruptly and nearly throwing down Isabella with the jerk, "you have been too generous already."

Mamma laughed. "Well, perhaps it is getting late . . . but we have not had the new Mazurka yet—I must play that first. . . ."

"Very well—the new Mazurka then, and that is all for to-night. You really will be exhausted."

And after the new Mazurka came tea and conversation; then Pan Famski and the pupils bowed and retired, and Mamma caught up Frycek and ran upstairs to Jadwige with him.

"Put him to bed quick, Jadwige! It's dreadfully late for him to be up!"

But Frycek was not sleepy. He said nothing while he was being undressed, but put his head down quietly on the pillow, shutting his eyes and waiting for Jadwige to go to bed, for he had a plan which he could not put into execution till everyone was asleep. After the candle was blown out he waited what seemed to him an age; then he sat up in bed and looked round. All was silent. Very softly he slipped out of bed, and without thinking of putting anything over his little shirt, opened the door and crept out into the passage. Everything still seemed safe. Slowly and cautiously he felt his way downstairs in the dark to the drawing-room, opened the door and ran to the big piano. He struggled for a few moments, first with the lid, then with the high piano-stool, but at last he was settled in his place. Once there he sighed with relief. He placed his hands on the keys and began playing the dance tunes his mother had performed that evening. At first it was hard to find the notes, but soon his fingers seemed to slip on to them of their own accord, and he could enjoy imitating the swing and go she had given to the tunes. So immersed in the music was he that he never heard Jadwige's step behind him, nor her exclamation of amazement and horror.

"Possessed!" she shuddered. "Mistress and master must hear of this!"

It was not long before Justine and Nicolas were

summoned. Louise and Isabella, soon aware of the unusual commotion and of Frycek's absence from the night-nursery, followed Papa and Mamma, and presently the little group stood in the doorway staring at the unconscious pianist.

"Nicolas!" whispered Justine, "listen! he is playing that Mazurka by heart and he cannot have heard it more than half a dozen times." Then her caution got the better of her pride. "He will catch his death of cold with nothing on," she added to her husband; and in a louder but still a gentle voice so as not to startle the child:

"My darling!" she said. "Come away now; you shall play to us to-morrow."

Frycek turned; and by the candle in his father's hand saw his mother with her arms stretched towards him. He jumped down and flung himself into them.

"Mamma," he cried, "I was only practising them so that I could play for the boys when you are tired. Don't be angry with me."

III

"I WANTED to speak to you for a moment, Professor, before the lesson." Justine pulled old Herr Zywny into the drawing-room and glanced round to make sure she was not overheard. "I don't think Frycek is very well to-day—he didn't eat any dinner—it is the heat I think. . . ." She frowned and looked out of the window.

"And what do you want? Am I to give him a pill?" The old man pulled his moustache and protruded his lips.

Justine smiled: "Not exactly. Only, don't give him too long a lesson. I would have sent word to you

not to come, but it would upset him more to miss the lesson . . . only not too long, please . . . and not too tiring. . . .”

Zywny grunted. “The lessons are never long . . . an hour or two, only . . . and for tiring him . . . to learn is always tiring—*that* I cannot help—if I am to teach at all. If the boy is ill I had better go away.”

He was irritable at the mere suggestion that his teaching could be fatiguing, and perhaps the heat had affected him, too, making him more irascible than usual.

As he spoke the last words Frycek had come in, his face white, his eyes large, his limbs heavy and listless. He looked up in alarm at his master’s words.

“Go away? But my lesson?” he blurted out, oblivious of the bows and greetings which should be paid by a little boy of six to his teacher.

“Your lesson?” growled Zywny. “But who can give a lesson to a little boy who does not eat his dinner? What was the dinner you refused so wickedly?”

Frycek hung his head and just breathed:

“Fish.”

“Fish? Come here, and I will tell you a story of another boy, who fortunately for him did *not* refuse fish, even when it was thrown to him from the window.”

“Thrown to him? and from the window? How was that, Herr Professor?” Frycek was leaning against his master’s knee and looking up with interest and amusement into his face, and Zywny was looking down serious but no longer offended or irritated. Mme. Chopin sighed with relief and slipped away. They would be best left alone now.

“There was once a boy,” narrated Zywny, “who was very poor but very fond of music—he cared for it more than for anything else. Especially he loved organ music, and far from the town where he lived—twenty-five miles away—lived a man who played the organ most beautifully. The boy longed very much to hear

him, and at last he saved up enough money to pay for a night's lodging and a breakfast. Then, with some bread in his pocket he set off to walk the twenty-five miles. He reached the town and spent all his money—it was not much, you may be sure—on his bed and his breakfast. Then he went to the church and listened all the morning while the organist played—and he learnt much from hearing the great player. But after that, my Frycek, he had to walk twenty-five miles back again—and he had had no dinner. He set off bravely enough, but he had not gone very far before he felt very tired, and very, very hungry. Just as he began to wonder if he could go any further he reached an inn by the roadside. From the kitchen of that inn came forth the most delicious odours—oh, you cannot think how delicious. ‘Well,’ thought the boy, ‘if I cannot eat I can smell,’ and he went up to the half-open door and smelt and smelt. As he stood with his nose at the chink, the window of the room above opened, and there dropped at his feet two herrings’ heads! Ah, ha! *he* did not despise them, like *some* little boys. No, he was too hungry and too sensible for that! He picked them up eagerly and tore them open—when, lo and behold! in each head was a golden ducat! And you may be sure he wasted no time, but ran into the inn and had as good a dinner as money would buy.”

Frycek pondered the story and then asked :

“ Who was that boy ? Do you know him ? ”

“ Yes. I know him and you know him, too, Master Frycek. His name was John Sebastian Bach.”

“ I thought perhaps it was,” said Frycek, “ because you said he was fond of the organ.” He ruminated a while. “ But I think—don’t you think, Herr Professor?—he did not spend *all* his two golden ducats on the dinner, but kept some to go back to the town and hear the organ again. . . . ”

The old man embraced him with a fervour and

roughness that seemed as if it would destroy the little piece of thistle-down.

"You, too, would renounce the flesh and the world for Art!" he exclaimed. "Listen now to this and say if it is not worth giving up position and wealth—even happiness—to study and appreciate such masterpieces as this. . . ."

To Frycek's intellect the words meant nothing; to his emotions they were stirring blasts of the trumpet, and they were followed by the Prelude and Fugue in C minor from the Well-Tempered Clavichord. These carried a meaning more moving to him than any words. He hung upon the notes in a passion of absorption; and when Zywny stopped, his pupil's fixed eyes and deep breaths were a better proof than speech of comprehension and feeling. Perhaps the contrast between the smallness of the child and the greatness of the art struck the master with compunction—for Frycek did look very white and weak; perhaps he remembered Mme. Chopin's warning and the uneaten dinner. At any rate he got up from the piano, picked up his music-case and went to the door.

"Enough," he said. "To-day I will not hear you play. Remember what I have just played: that is great music."

Mme. Chopin, hearing no sounds from the drawing-room, came quietly in to see what was happening. Frycek was standing by a chair, without moving, his eyes fixed.

IV

FRYCEK was progressing along the Casimir Platz by hopping three times on his right leg and then three times on his left leg. Isabella ran on in front and then ran back to see if she was going the right way, and Louise brought up the rear with Mamma carrying on a serious and grown-up conversation. Frycek, occupied by hopping, heard only part of it.

"Where are you going, Mamma?"

"To Countess Wodzinska, my dear, to enquire how she is."

Frycek hopped on. Presently he heard:

"In a year or two, when they are older, your Papa will take the eldest, Antoine and Casimir."

"Are there any others, Mamma?"

"A baby boy, called Felix, and a little girl about three."

Frycek was interested and letting down the suspended leg turned back to Mamma and Louise.

"How old is Antoine, Mamma?" he asked.

"About as old as you are, I think, Frycek."

"Then I wish he would come to us at once. When he's older I shan't want him."

"Silly Frycek!" Louise was eager to explain—"If you are the same age now, when *he* is older *you* will be older too. . . ."

But at that moment they reached the Wodzinski Palace and the children had to stand still and silent behind Mamma while she enquired from the liveried servant after the Countess's health. In the midst of the questions, answers, compliments and messages, Frycek peeping into the hall beyond saw a door open and a little creature in white with black hair and black eyes come out. As he watched her she caught sight of him; the two children smiled at each other, and the little girl began to lurch uncertainly towards him, when a voice was heard calling:

"Mlle. Marie! Mlle. Marie!"

She stopped; smiled at him again, blew him a kiss and then ran back to the hidden summoner. At the same moment his mother's conversation was over; she turned away and the great door banged to behind them.

"Mamma," said Frycek, "I saw Mlle. Marie; she blew me a kiss."

"Oh, Frycek! Oh, Louise! Look, look, a caravan!"

Isabella came rushing back pointing to a string of camels winding down the street, a strange foreign-looking man behind them prodding them onwards.

Frycek looked—listened too. Round each camel's neck hung a string of bells which tinkled and tinkled as the animals shuffled along.

"Lahdy dahdy, lahdy dahdy . . ." behind the camels came a dancing bear, his keeper holding a rope round his nose and singing gruffly to encourage him.

"Come along, Frycek, it's getting dark—I don't want you to stay out late—you'll catch cold." Mamma took his unwilling hand and led him along.

"Listen, Mamma—listen to the bells—and the funny old man singing——" but Mamma was inexorable.

That evening after tea they all sat round the big table in the drawing-room with the lamp in the middle, each busy with some absorbing occupation. Mamma had Emily on her lap and was doing some sewing whenever she could put in a stitch. Isabella and Louise had their heads together—they were making a book—Louise was writing the story and Isabella was illustrating it, so there had to be a lot of consultation.

Presently Louise looked up.

"What are *you* doing, Frycek?" for Frycek too was busy with pen, paper and ink.

"What are you doing, Frycek?"

"Writing a Mazurka . . ." and the composer did not raise his head.

V

"Now, children, it is time you were dressing. Jadwige is busy, so you girls must help Frycek. I will come up presently with Emily and put the finishing touches."

"Yes, Mamma. I will dress Frycek—may I, Mamma?"

Louise was taking a last glance at a new volume of Hoffmann's tales, but Isabella was quite ready to undertake her brother's toilet.

"Yes, my dear, if you are careful. Be sure he washes properly. . . ."

"I *always* wash properly," interposed Frycek, rather offended, "and Isabella dresses me very carefully."

"Very well," replied Mamma, smiling; "now, Louise, put down that book and go upstairs or you will be late."

Louise shut the book with a sigh, and followed her brother and sister upstairs gloomily, convinced of the hollowness of life.

When they opened the door of Mamma's dressing-room where they were to wash and dress, it all looked so strange, so thrilling, so prophetic of the party for which they were to prepare, that Isabella and Frycek gave several joyful skips, and even Louise's severity was relaxed.

By the side of the white porcelain stove, on which hung three large white towels, were three big bowls on three little stools, each full of steaming hot water. On a sofa near by were two white frocks, a pink sash and a blue sash, two pairs of white open-work socks, and on the floor two pairs of dancing sandals. Frycek's clothes were on the arm-chair, and consisted of new shoes, white stockings, and a blue velvet coat and knickerbockers. The festive scene was lighted up by long candles; the flickering flames gave a mysterious, uncertain look to the familiar room.

For a few moments the children hopped about, emitting cheerful, inarticulate squeaks ; but it was not long before Isabella came to a sense of the realities of life.

“Come, Frycek. We must be quick and wash or the water will be cold.”

They set to work on the labours of the toilet, but perhaps not with all the requisite concentration and tenacity, for Frycek was not yet in his coat when the door opened and Mamma came in.

“Not ready yet ? Get into your coat quick, Frycek. Isabella, fetch me the comb—his hair is dreadful. My dear Louise, I must tie your sash again—it is all on one side—now, my dears, let me look at you.”

They stood in front of her in a row, shining, rosy, excited, and anxious.

“You little girls look very nice. . . . There is something wrong with your coat, Frycek. I don’t like that stiff, upright collar. I wish you could have tried it on before—it ought to be taken off altogether, and you might have a lace collar. . . .”

Mme. Chopin was talking almost to herself ; presently she noticed the shade of worry on her son’s face, for she gave a laugh, raised his hanging head with a long finger under his chin, kissed his soft cheek and exclaimed cheerfully.

“Never mind, Frycek, you look a little duck ! Go downstairs all of you, and don’t get untidy while I put Emily to bed.”

When they entered the drawing-room it had a strange, cold, unfriendly look, in spite of the many bright candles that illuminated it so brilliantly. They shivered, and sat down on the stiff-backed chairs, Frycek’s short legs dangling uncomfortably ; they stared at each other across vast empty spaces that held them in a chilly isolation. Suddenly Jadwige came in carrying a big tray covered with bottles and glasses, all jingling and rattling. She bustled briskly

up to a side table, set it down, straightened herself, and after a glance at the three solemn, stiff, silent children, burst out laughing.

“ Well ! if you are not like three little images ! ”

They were not pleased. Louise tossed her head and looked haughtily away. Isabella frowned, Frycek began to feel his lips tremble while something seemed to rise from his throat towards his eyes.

Good-natured Jadwige saw that she had made a mistake and hastened to put things right.

“ But here is a biscuit—just one apiece of these lovely iced biscuits—to keep you busy till the people begin to arrive. Then what fun you will have with all the pretty ladies in their best dresses, and the clever gentlemen making fine speeches ! ”

Ah, those iced biscuits *did* look good . . . Frycek took his neatly between a delicate finger and thumb, that would never get sticky, or drop crumbs on his velvet suit ; presently nothing was to be heard but the munching of three busy little mouths.

Mamma came down exactly at the right moment. Every tongue had removed the last trace of sugar from its companion lips half a minute before ; half a minute after the first bell and knock were heard ; then the stream of arrivals began and the party was in being. Suddenly, so it seemed to Frycek, the world he knew slipped away from him. He was alone, in a great forest of moving trees—trees with pink and yellow flounces or black legs, trees with faces far away on the topmost branches, trees so tall that they shut out from him all the familiar furniture and occupants of the drawing-room. To add to the wonder of it all there came forth a roar of sound, in which, if you listened carefully, you could distinguish high, shrill voices and low gruff ones, rippling or gurgling laughter, crackling silk dresses and tinkling wine glasses.

Suddenly there was a great movement away from the middle of the room to the chairs and sofas at the

sides. Frycek was carried by the current to a shadowy corner, from which he saw Zywny advance to the piano and seat himself. Silence fell over the company and he waited breathless, wondering what was coming. It was a fugue, but by Klengel, not Bach, and Frycek only listened with half a mind. Indeed he had fallen into a reverie from which the applause awoke him, and in the silence that followed he was amazed to hear his master say :

“Where is Frycek ? Come along, Frycek, and let us hear you.”

He took a step forward, and a lady beside him nodded at him and smiled encouragingly. It was Mme. Wodzinska, and she looked so friendly that he smiled back. Then he turned to the piano and saw his mother standing there beside Herr Zywny, and beckoning. He ran towards them and under their familiar glances he forgot the audience and placed himself obediently on the music stool.

“What shall I play ? ” he asked.

“The Paër Variations ” . . . and he began.

It was a real roar that greeted him when he skipped down and made his bow—so loud and full of emotion that he turned to his mother in bewilderment. She took his hand and led him to the door.

“It was very nice, Frycek ; but go to bed now or you won’t sleep at all. . . .”

“*Mais, Madame,*” he heard a lady exclaim excitedly behind him, “*Mais, Madame, c’est un nouveau Mozart.*”

Mamma opened the door, took him out and kissed him.

“Good night, darling,” she said ; why did she look so queer ?

VI

PAPA and Mamma were in the middle of a great discussion. "After all, he's only a baby still," said Papa.

"Eight years old in six weeks," said Mamma.

"Five weeks and two days," interposed Frycek quickly, shocked at his father's remark—a baby indeed!

Papa pulled his beard.

"What does Herr Zywny say?"

"He has given his consent."

"But what does he *think*? Will it be good for the child or bad?"

"He doesn't seem to know. Sometimes he says his head will be turned, sometimes that it will be good for him to be accustomed to an audience young. He seems in two minds about it but Niemcewicz has evidently talked him round."

"Do *you* think his head will be turned?"

Justine laughed and looked scornful.

"I don't think anything could do that," she replied; but she spoke in German, a precaution against Frycek's understanding that made Nicolas laugh.

"What does the child think himself?" he asked presently.

"Frycek!" said Mamma; his attention had been wandering, but immediately he turned to her and listened. "Frycek! you know this concert that Herr Niemcewicz wants you to play at—would you *like* to play, or would all the grand ladies frighten you?"

"Oh, no, they wouldn't frighten me a bit, Mamma. They're always so kind, and give me cake when I play in their drawing-rooms. Princess Czartoryska gave me a piece of cake with almonds on it, and it was as big—as big as Emily's face, nearly."

"So you like to play for the Princesses who give you cake—eh?"

"Yes, Papa—unless you and Mamma don't want me to . . ." something told the sensitive child of his parents' hesitation; but Justine saw an expression in her son's face that made her say:

"But if we don't mind?"

"Then, Mamma," said Frycek, eagerly, "I *should* like to play, for Mme. Niemcewicz said it was to get money for poor people who are ill—I should like that very much."

Justine looked across at her husband, who smiled back at her triumphant eyes.

"Well, if he never has a worse reason than that for playing in public he will come to no harm. And after all it is only once in a way. . . . Will you write to Niemcewicz then and tell him it is agreed upon? And you, Frycek, must tell Herr Zywny, and begin practising your piece."

"Oh, I have been practising it already—it is a concerto of Gyrowetz—I played it to you and Mamma on Sunday; don't you remember?"

"Yes, I remember perfectly, and I thought you played it very well; but you know, what pleases your mother and me is not enough for the public."

"Isn't it? But I had much rather please you than the public!" and Frycek's bound into his mother's arms ended the conversation.

The time before the concert passed quickly enough. Perhaps Mme. Chopin was busier than Frycek in the interval, for she had to have his velvet coat remodelled, and to find a really good piece of lace to make into a collar. When the evening of the performance came, however, the affair of dressing him had to be left to Jadwige and Isabella, for Mamma was in bed with an incapacitating headache. All the rest of the family drove off to the concert leaving her to a long evening of solitude and silence and anxiety for the success of the little hero. At last the rumbling in the street, the

rolling back of the heavy front door and the suppressed sounds of voices and laughter told her of a cheerful return. Nicolas, who knew she would not sleep without kissing her son, picked him up, stole into the darkened room and crept softly to her bedside, whispering :

“ Here he is, Mamma.”

She turned round and put out her arms ; Papa held him down and her lips touched his fresh cheek.

“ Well, my darling, how did it go ? ”

“ Quite well, Mamma ; Herr Zywny said ‘ Good.’ ”

“ And the public ? What did the public like best ? ”

“ My lace collar, Mamma ! ”

VII

AFTER this appearance in public Frycek became a greater favourite than ever with the grand ladies of Warsaw. Almost every week some powdered servant in crimson livery with swinging gold tassels would thunder at the door and deliver an invitation for Pan Chopinek—little Master Chopin—to attend the evening salon of this or that countess ; or a princess would rustle out of her carriage, and climb up to Justine’s drawing room to beg her to bring the little boy to tea—“ Prince Adam will be there, and has specially requested ” . . . or “ I hear he has written a new valse we are *dying* to hear. . . .” At first the cautious mother doubted and hesitated ; but Frycek remained through all as simple as when he was an unknown child in the nursery. The only effect his acquaintance with high society seemed to have on him was to make him more gentle in his manner and more delicate in his taste. The indiscriminate flattery in which he was drenched left him still caring only to please his parents

and his master; the excitement of society and the luxurious foods and drinks pressed on him by his grateful hostesses did not begin to make him greedy or worldly—his greatest pleasure remained a romp with Emily—his greatest, unrivalled interest, music.

Even in the most musical of the salons there was much talk of things other than music, talk that reached Frycek's ears in the impressive if hazy way in which grown-up talk penetrates to a child.

"So the Czar is coming next month to open the Diet. . . ."

"So I hear. Is he going to visit Prince Czartoryski?"

"Oh, I don't think so. He is staying with the Viceroy."

"Unfortunate . . . these imperial visits never agree with the Archduke, and one of his aides-de-camp is sure to suffer. Don't you remember, last time, poor Anton Bronicki . . ." the voices were lowered, the two heads drew ominously together, and Frycek wondered, shivering, what had happened to poor Anton Bronicki. In May, when Alexander I arrived and drove in state through Warsaw to open the Diet, Frycek stood in the street with his father, gazed with interest at the flashing uniforms and splendid horses, and listened with rising excitement to the military band that enveloped the procession. It was all so moving that he squeezed his father's hand and jumped up and down—but that was partly because he didn't want to cry.

Nicolas Chopin sighed. But in the street it would have been egregious folly to have pointed out to his son the vanity of these trappings of royalty or to have suggested, however remotely, the hollowness of the pomp, and the superficiality of the greetings that bore the alien ruler on his way. Afterwards, when he heard how Alexander had renewed his promises of constitutional and liberal government, he wondered if

he had been unduly pessimistic ; but this wonder was short-lived, and expired miserably under Constantine's edicts establishing a strict censorship of the press and of all publications.

The elders of the Chopin family were, however, extremely cautious in their political deeds and even words. They spoke much of the glories of Poland to their children, but nothing of her servitude, and their attitude towards those in authority was strictly correct even if it were stiff and cold. Already some young hot-headed enthusiasts were murmuring secretly to each other of independence and revolution—Nicolas and Justine dreaded this talk, and avoided the talkers. It was impossible for something of the political atmosphere not to reach three such active minds as those of their eldest children, but they succeeded, with Frycek at any rate, in keeping away from his apprehension anything more definite than a general feeling that Russians were very wicked and tyrannical and that some day Poland would again be greater than any other nation, as she had been in the days of King Casimir.

Meanwhile the really important things of life remained the study of an Andante of Dussek's—how he wished his hands would get bigger—the stretches were so difficult—and the news of Mme. Catalani's visit to Warsaw. She was to give four concerts in the Town Hall and though the tickets cost 30 florins each Frycek had persuaded his father to let him go to two of them. Louise and Isabella were to go to the other two, and to Frycek's inextinguishable regret Emily was pronounced too small for any of them.

Frycek's concerts were to be the last ones of the set ; but before that he had heard and seen the great prima donna, and even spoken and played to her. Three days after her arrival Princess Radziwill drove up in hot haste to the house in Casimir Platz. Mme. Catalani was coming to her *salon* that evening ; she had heard

of nothing but Chopinek since she had been in Warsaw, and was wild to hear him; *would* Mme. Chopin be so *very, very* kind as to forgive the short notice and bring him to play to her that very night? Mme. Chopin smiled, glanced at her husband, and consented; and Frycek jumped about so, with excitement at the idea of actually *meeting* the great lady, that it was hardly possible to dress him or brush his hair.

The drawing-room was already full of beautifully dressed, smiling ladies when they got there; and by the piano was standing a fat old lady with sparkling jewels in her hair. They had hardly had time to sit down—Frycek no time to wonder who she was—before the fat lady opened her mouth and began to fill the room with beautiful sound. Rich, clear, thrilling, the tone wound up and down in lovely, delicate patterns—a bird, a fountain, a shower of falling stars. This, he felt suddenly and distinctly, was the most perfect music he had ever heard—if only he could make the piano sing like that. . . . As if he had been in a dream he found that Princess Radziwill had taken his hand and led him to the goddess—no longer a fat old lady, but a divine voice, a voice with large, deep, dark eyes looking into his. As he turned to the piano he thought with fervour—"I must play my best for her"—and his tiny fingers seized the wide chords of his Dussek as if he had suddenly been changed into a giant. He finished; and while the grand ladies applauded, Catalani stood motionless, with deep serious eyes, looking at him. It was as if she were telling him something—something that one artist tells another—something that the applauding princesses could never understand. Suddenly she laughed and curtsied to him. "*Grazie, Maestro,*" she said, "*Je me souviendrai de M. Chopin.*"

A week later a little parcel arrived for Frycek. Inside it was a gold watch.

"Look, Frycek," cried Isabella. "There is

something on the back! Oh, do look! ‘*Donné par Mme. Catalani à Frédéric Chopin, âgé de dix ans*’!”

VIII

A FEW months after Mme. Catalani's visit to Warsaw Frycek received an invitation to tea with Princess Czetwertynska. He always liked going to her house because she was *really* fond of music. There was never any talking or noise in her drawing-room while anyone was playing, and her piano was a particularly good one. Besides, she had a fascinating book of Russian fairy tales which he generally had time to read, and it was an unlucky chance if he did not come back with at least one new story for Emily's delectation.

This visit turned out a very quiet one. There was only one visitor there—a lady dressed all in black, with a very heavy voluminous black veil hanging round her, and large, melancholy eyes. The Princess sat next her on a sofa, and seemed to be treating her very kindly. Frycek was asked to play, and he played something very soft and sad, because he was thinking how sad that heavy black veil was. When he stopped he saw that the lady's eyes were full of tears, and that the Princess was stroking her arm. He moved away from the piano and found his story book, for he felt sure the two ladies did not want to occupy themselves with him; it did not take him long to become immersed in the story of Vassilissa the Wise.

When he had finished it and returned to Princess Czetwertynska's drawing-room, he became aware that the two ladies were even more agitated than before. The visitor had taken off her bonnet and veil and was pouring out a long and exciting story to her hostess.

“She was the mother of one of the students,”

Frycek heard ; “ you know—one of the students who had been arrested in July ; and imagine, Princess, she had not heard a word of him for seven months. I could not bear to refuse her when she begged to be allowed to see the Archduke just for a few moments—but, oh, it would have been better if I had. . . .”

The Princess murmured something unintelligible.

“ I’m afraid—I think perhaps he was angry with me for letting her in—he was in a terrible passion ; she fell on her knees and begged for just a word of her son and he pushed her away with his foot. He was so angry—perhaps he didn’t know what he was doing—but oh, it was so agonizing to watch it and be unable to help. . . .”

She began to sob ; her eyes were wide and staring and there were no tears in them now.

The Princess spoke very gently and so low that Frycek did not hear all she said.

“ It is not always so . . . often and often you are able to help . . . without you things would be much worse . . . You know they call you our ‘ guardian angel ’ . . . ”

She became calmer ; closed her eyes, and laid back her head on the sofa.

“ *Merci, chère amie,*” she said weakly, “ you are always good to me. I ought not to have told you, but it is such a relief, and you are the only one I have.”

There was a pause. Presently she opened her eyes and smiled faintly. “ And you think the child’s parents will let him come ? Music is so soothing—and he would not mind if it was a child—you know he sees no one.”

The Princess smiled and said something that was inaudible to Frycek.

The strange lady sat up straighter and spoke in a stronger voice. “ Come and talk to me, little musician. I have not thanked you yet for playing to me. Will

you come to my house some day, and play to me there? I have a little boy there just about your age."

Frycek went towards the sofa and stood beside her while she spoke. There was something strangely fascinating about her; in spite of her tears and agitation, so very alarming to a child, he felt a longing to see her, to be near her and do what she wanted.

"Yes, Madame," he said at once, "I should like to play for you . . ." he hesitated a moment, then taking her hand in his he kissed it.

The lady smiled and glanced over at the Princess.

"He is already a courtier it seems . . . Well, *chère amie*, do the best for me you can—I need all the help and affection you can give me." The next moment she had gone, and the Princess and Frycek stood in the middle of the room looking at each other.

"She is Princess Lowicka," said the Princess. "Do you think your parents will let you go and play for her? Try to persuade them, Frycek; she needs it so much."

"I *think* they will let me go," said Frycek; there was a pause. "She is really very beautiful," he said, meditatively, "in spite of the black veil."

IX

PRINCESS LOWICKA was the Polish wife of Constantine, Viceroy and Commander-in-chief of Poland, a brother of the Czar, Alexander I. They had just left the royal palace in Warsaw and taken up their residence at Belvedere, a castle Constantine had built on the outskirts of the town for a French mistress whom he had dismissed before it was finished. Whatever the feelings of Nicolas and Justine at the idea of their only son

going to Belvedere it was an invitation almost impossible to reject, and it was not long before Frycek found himself driving out to the palace in one of the royal equipages.

It must be confessed that had it rested with Frycek the Princess's request would, in spite of her beauty and charm, have been refused. Jadwige's stories of the ogre Archduke, whispered in his ear under the seal of secrecy, returned painfully to his memory, combined obscurely, but alarmingly, with the picture of the unknown who "in a terrible passion" had pushed away with his foot some woman on her knees. Far from persuading his parents to let him go he would have seized any opportunity to avoid the visit, and now sat miserably in the carriage, in his first serious attack of nerves.

The drive was not long, and all too soon he found himself standing outside a door while the soldier on guard asked for instructions. The door opened quickly and Princess Lowicka herself came out to welcome him and bring him in. The sight of a face he knew was a comfort ; he took her outstretched hand in his, and immediately felt brave to face a hundred Russian ogres and baby-eaters.

The room into which the Princess led him contained, however, no ogre. In one corner sat a handsome middle-aged man who rose and bowed respectfully at the Princess's entrance ; a small, pale-faced boy, and a large white borzoi, were both lying at full length in front of a big open wood fire. The boy did not turn round when they came in, and even when the Princess cried, "Look, Paul ! here is Frycek !" he only raised his head, looked at them with an unsmiling eye, and did not move from where he lay. The borzoi was more sociable ; he stood up and came towards them, swinging his tail backwards and forwards, and obviously expecting as his due the caresses he received from his mistress.

The Princess led Frycek up to the handsome gentleman. "Make your bow to M. le Comte de Moriollles," she said, "who is so kind as to teach Paul and take care of him."

The Count and Frycek bowed to each other, and the Princess turned to a little table, spread with fruit and cake, and a decanter of wine. She asked Frycek if he would like anything to eat, but his nervous tremors had destroyed his appetite, and all he could manage was a blanched almond and a raisin.

While he ate his eyes roved round the room. At one end were heavy black curtains; at the other a fine piano, which instantly attracted his attention. The Princess soon noticed the direction his glances were taking, and asked him with a laugh if he wanted to try it; the next moment he was on the stool playing a lively polonaise. The piano was a good one; the Princess was an appreciative listener, and it was some time before Frycek slipped down and returned to the warm hearth. When he did so he saw, with a start of surprise, that another auditor had entered unobserved.

He was a tall heavily-built man, dressed in the guards' uniform, with a high collar, holding his back and his neck very stiff and straight. He had a large mouth, a large crooked nose, and large, black, overhanging eyebrows. He was very ugly, Frycek thought—if he were "in a terrible passion" he would be hideous; at present he was smiling—grinning, really—twisting his lower lip into queer shapes, but looking as if he wanted to be friendly.

"So," said Constantine, "you've finished at last. I suppose you make up all those pretty tunes out of your own head. Dances, weren't they? Eh?"

"Yes, sir," said Frycek, "I played two mazurkas and a waltz and a polonaise."

"Polonaise! That's the tune for a Polish musician! Don't you play waltzes and such French and German nonsense. Stick to the Polish tunes! Polonaises—

mazurkas—what else is there, Johanna? Oh, I know, Krakowiak—play Krakowiaks, too—stick to your own tunes, little boy, and don't run after the foreigners. And when you get tired of playing dances play a march and the soldiers shall march to it. Eh, Paul? how would that be? Would you like the boy to play you a march?"

"I should like a march better than a dance," said Paul heavily. "I'm going to be a soldier when I grow up. What are you going to be?"

"A professor," said Frycek. "I'll write you a march if you like."

"That's right, boy. Marches are the best music, when all is said and done. Aren't they, Moriollles? Give him a glass of wine, Johanna. Come here and let me see you drink that off. Well, now! Who'd have thought those little paws"—he took Frycek's shuddering hand into his great rough grasp—"who'd have thought those little paws could make so much noise! And tell me, what makes you look at the ceiling when you play? Do you find the notes written there? Eh? Haw, haw, haw!" And the great creature laughed ponderously at his own wit.

Frycek did not think he was very amusing, and he still thought him very ugly, but he soon realized that there was nothing that he need fear. The Archduke was always as kind as he knew how to be to the little boy, and when the young composer arrived one fine day with his march, was much delighted and gave it to his band-master to orchestrate and play on the regimental band. Frycek's excitement over this was immense, and he lay awake several nights scheming to become a conductor, or even better, a band-master who had such a wondrous big stick to whirl round his head and such a bright red uniform with so much gold lace.

After a few visits Paul became more friendly. Frycek used to tell him some of the stories with which he

amused Emily ; and he often won a strange wizened smile, especially if the tale was a very blood-curdling one. Paul used to come down to the Casimir Platz in his Russian *attelage* of four horses abreast, generally with Count de Moriolles, and carry Frycek off to Belvedere for the day ; and all the neighbours put their heads out of the windows and wondered why the Archduke's carriage stopped so often at Nicolas Chopin's door. But of all the inhabitants of that gloomy palace the one Frycek really cared for was the beautiful, unhappy, black-veiled Princess Lowicka, the guardian angel of the Poles.

X

"SEVEN o'clock ! Oh, that tiresome bell !"

Frederic had a proper boyish hatred of being waked in the morning, and promptly turned over and went to sleep again.

He did not have long in peace. Five minutes later Jadwige was knocking—thundering—at his door ; answered by grunts, she opened it, stumped across the room and began to shake him.

"Now, Pan Frycek ! Wake up ! It's a lovely morning !"

She left the bed, went to the window and pulled up the blind. The full splendour of a June sun rushed in and woke him more effectually than noise or shaking. He sat up and blinked.

"It doesn't look bad," he admitted ; then gradually recollecting himself. "And it's Thursday to-day—half-holiday ! Splendid ! Now, Queen Jadwige, be off, for I'm going to get up !"

In half an hour there was another bell. Frederic was

already almost downstairs and was the first to enter the schoolroom.

He was closely followed by Marylski, and in another moment the room was crowded with noisy, laughing, stamping boys. In a few minutes Barcinski, the assistant master, made his appearance, and with a good deal of thumping on his desk obtained silence.

"Prayers" consisted of two Latin prayers hastily mumbled through by Barcinski, and then the tumult broke out again. In spite of the noise, however, they somehow got into their places, for suddenly there was silence. Every boy was standing in his desk as still as a statue, his exercise book open in front of him. The door flew open.

"Good morning, young gentlemen."

"Good morning, Pan Chopin." And the boys sat down. Nicolas went from desk to desk to see that all the work expected had been properly done; then he turned to Barcinski.

"Please bring the boys down to coffee."

"I will, Pan Chopin."

Now they all trooped down to breakfast in the big hall before going to school. It was a long, high, light room, wainscoted with oak, on the panels of which were painted the coats-of-arms of the Bishops of Warsaw, the former owners of the house. The ladies of the Chopin family were already there helping to pour out the coffee. Frederic took his place next to Louise, now a grown-up young lady of eighteen.

The pupils all stood round tables. Another silence; grace, again in Latin; and then Babel.

When breakfast was finished, the ladies and Pan Chopin went out first, then the boys rushed for their hats and coats, and without paying much attention to Barcinski, started off for school. In the meantime Frederic returned to the empty class-room upstairs. He was not yet at the Grammar School, but was to go there in the autumn, and was being prepared for the

entrance examination by his father and Barcinski. He worked hard all the morning, and at twelve o'clock Emily burst into the room, her eyes flashing, her hands clasping a parcel.

"What's that?" he asked.

"Oh, Frycek, Mamma has been such an angel! She says it's a fine day and we can have dinner in the park, and here it is! Put it in your satchel and don't let's waste a single second!"

"I don't think I can put the park in my satchel, Emily. Here, here, don't knock me down! . . ."

It did not take long for the children to put on their outdoor things, and in another minute they were hastening through the streets to the park, their heads close together, their tongues wagging furiously, the absorbing chatter only interrupted from time to time by peals of laughter at some childish joke."

"Well, Emily, and what have you been doing all the morning?"

"Oh, Frederic, have you ever heard of a writer called Mickiewicz? Well, you need not laugh. . . . I have just been reading his Ballads, and they are really fascinating. Have you read them?"

"Yes, and when I read them I admired them as much as you do."

"I do wish, brother, that I were a man. If I were I would write poetry like that when I grew up."

"Very well, just as you like—we'll change you into one. Hocus pocus, abracadabra! Now, instead of Emily, you are my brother Emile!"

"What fun! Now mind, Frycek, when we are alone you're always to call me Emile."

"Certainly; and when you grow up you are to write poetry like Mickiewicz—it's a bargain. I don't see why you shouldn't—you wrote some very nice poetry for our Christmas magazine—'Oh, fluttering butterfly, in the garden gay' . . ."

"Be quiet—don't tease. You know I was only

just nine then. . . . Look here—wouldn't this be a good place for dinner? "

"Under that tree—very good, I think."

They stopped under a large plane tree not far from a sheet of artificial water, on which were swimming a group of swans. The grass was green, the sun was shining, the merry voices of children at play some distance off were brought to them by the gentle breeze.

Frederic took off his coat and spread it carefully in the shade of the tree.

"Sit there, Emile, you mustn't get wet and catch a cold or we shan't be allowed out together again. Now let's see what Mamma has put in the basket . . ."

Evidently the right things; at any rate what occupied all their attention for a good while. When nothing edible was left, the papers and remnants were carefully replaced in the basket. Frederic lay on his back and shut his eyes.

Suddenly he jumped up and turned to his sister.

"I've got an idea!" he cried. "Let's form a literary society—like the Polish Society of Arts—or the Polish Society for the Study of Science—and I will be the President and you can be the Secretary!"

"A Society?" Emily wasn't quite sure what he meant.

"Yes . . . a set of gentlemen meet together once a month or something, and one of them reads an essay on 'The Influence of Virgil on Polish Literature,' and all the others say how clever it is, or that it's all wrong."

"And should we be the gentlemen?"

"Yes; and I would write something one week and you the next . . . or as often as we could. The Secretary has to arrange with the President when the meeting has to be held, and then the Secretary has to summon the members."

"Oh, I think that would be great fun. But what shall we call the society?"

"We might call it the Casimirplatz Literary Society . . . and, Emile, let's have names ourselves."

"Different names—oh, yes! Oh, yes! I'll be Emile Something and you can be Frederic Something. You think of a surname."

"It ought to be like Chopin, but not exactly that. . . . How would Pichon do? You see, it's got all the same letters, only arranged differently."

"And it's quite a real name! I think it's splendid! Oh, Frycek, how clever you are! Oh! is it really time to go in? What a pity holidays don't last longer. I wish we two could have dinner out in the Park together every day!"

XI

WHEN Frederic and Emily reached home, Isabella in her muslin dress was on the look out, and jumped down the stairs to meet them.

"The pupils are here dancing," she cried, "and the Rector and Mme. Linde, and Countess Wodzinska, and Marie—and Mamma says you are to wash and change as quick as you can and come into the drawing-room."

Frederic had soon prepared himself for company and run down to make his bows to the visitors—Mme. Wodzinska, one of his first patrons; Marie, her little nine-year-old daughter, the sister of Casimir and Anton, two of the pupils, whom she often came to visit; Dr. Linde, the Rector of the Grammar School, and his wife, an exceptionally fine pianist and great crony of Frederic. When the waltz then being played came to an end, Frederic begged Madame Linde to join him in a duet, and a particularly gay and spirited Polonaise they played.

"Thank you a thousand times," said Frederic when they had finished. "I do love playing with you—

you give me the *verve* of a swallow, instead of making me feel like an old cab-horse, as some partners do. But you mustn't spend all the evening playing. Look at Isabella and Barcinski sitting there together—I think you ought to go and chaperon them, as Mamma is evidently neglecting her duties ! ”

“ Ridiculous boy ! ” laughed Mme. Linde, who could not, however, help being amused at the coquettish way in which the sixteen-year-old Isabella was making conversation with the very youthful assistant master. “ Ridiculous boy ! I might as well stay here and chaperon you and Marie.”

Marie Wodzinska had indeed left the dancers and drawn up a small stool beside the piano, where she was sitting, gazing silently at Frederic.

“ Oh, Marie is my pupil,” replied Frederic seriously ; “ she has come to watch her master play—one of the best ways of making progress, is it not, Mademoiselle ? ”

Marie nodded, but still did not speak.

“ Then I had better not interrupt the lesson,” and Mme. Linde left the piano.

For a long time Frederic played and Marie watched. At last Mme. Chopin declared everyone must be hungry or at least thirsty, and led them through the curtains at the back to take their refreshments in the back drawing-room. Frederic and Marie remained behind.

“ Now, Marie,” he said rising, “ I want to hear how you are getting on. Play me the last thing you have learnt.”

He helped her up on to the music stool, and listened to her playing—criticizing, advising, explaining, until the Countess came back into the room.

“ We must go home now, Marie,” she said. “ Have you had a nice lesson ? How good of you it is, Chopinek, to take so much trouble with a baby.”

Frederic blushed ; he made no answer, but took the Countess's hand and kissed it.

Hardly had the Wodzinskis left when a loud ring

at the bell was heard, and Herr Zywny was shown in. Frederic thought he looked peculiarly grave, as if he had come to say something of special importance ; but after a few words of greeting, he told Frederic to go and play something—that nocturne of Field's. Frederic always played very carefully when his master was there, for even at the mature age of twelve he would not have liked a scolding, or even a severe look from that bright, piercing eye. He need not have feared. Displeasure was far from entering the old man's mind. Yet when the nocturne was over he sighed deeply, took out his large silk pocket-handkerchief and began to polish his spectacles. Frederic came towards him nervously.

"What was wrong?" he asked.

Zywny groaned.

"Nothing—nothing was wrong," he muttered.

"But——" Frederic began. . . .

"No, no, I say!" exclaimed the old man, vehemently. "Nothing is wrong; and when there is nothing wrong with the pupil why should he any longer have a master?"

Frederic stopped, petrified, in the middle of the room.

"W—what?" he stammered, "not have a master? Are you going to give me up, dearest sir? Will you not teach me any more?"

Zywny rose, crossed the room and took his hand.

"It is not that I *will* not, dear boy," he said, very gently, "I cannot. You have learnt all I can teach you. Yes, Madame," he added, turning to Justine, but still holding Frederic's hand. "He is my equal now; all I can do for him is to leave him to follow music as his own inclinations bid him."

XII

THE Entrance Examination for the Grammar School was held in the middle of September. Frederic came back in the evening to find his mother and sisters full of anxiety to know how he had done.

"It went off quite well, I think," he said. "Papa smiled at me from the platform. I don't know yet what my place is, but Papa is sure to bring back the results with him to-night."

"And did you see the Professors? Were they nice?"

"Of course I saw the Professors—at least some of them. Whether they're nice or not I shall be able to tell you better at Christmas. I thought Isabella would want to know what they look like though, so I drew some of their portraits on my blotting paper."

For some time now Frederic had had a craze for caricaturing; every new face he saw became the victim of his pen. His sisters were much amused at the strange picture gallery on the blotting-paper, and his mother, who knew most of the subjects, thought to herself that Frycek was really clever and amusing. Presently Nicolas was heard at the door, and the blotting-paper disappeared very quickly.

"Well, my boy," he said at once, putting his hand on Frederic's shoulder, "you've done quite creditably. You've been placed in the fourth class. Work your best, and your mother and I shall be well satisfied with you."

"In the fourth! Oh, splendid!" Emily began to execute a war-dance.

"Well done, my darling." Justine kissed her son, and he returned it with a great hug.

"I expect it is all due to Barcinski coaching you so well." This contribution, it is perhaps needless to say, was from Isabella, and was received with shouts of laughter from the rest of the family.

"May I not have any share in the credit?" asked

Nicolas humbly, with a twinkle in his eye, adding in an undertone to his wife : " The young man may do well as a coach, but I can't say much for his powers of keeping order."

Well might the Professor say so. The very next day he was obliged to be away from home nearly all the afternoon, for the beginning of the Academic Year always found him very busy examining and organizing new courses of study. Somehow the news of his absence reached the boarders, and Barcinski, who was supposed to be supervising the preparation of the home-work, suddenly found himself in Pandemonium. Shouts, whistling, kicking-matches began, followed by storms of paper pellets ; and even an exit from the room of half a dozen boys, who began an impromptu game of fives in the passage. Frederic had happened to be out of the class-room when the disturbance began. Directly he heard the noise he realized what had happened, and with a vague feeling that his father's son ought to do something, he hurried along to the scene of action.

Barcinski, pale and trembling, was leaning helplessly against the wall ; when Frederic came in he turned to him desperately.

" What am I to do ? " he wailed. " They won't stop—it's awful ! "

At that moment one of the boys climbed up to the big lamp hanging from the ceiling and extinguished it. Total darkness ! There was a moment of surprised silence, of which Frederic took advantage to say cheerfully :

" You all seem to be enjoying yourselves ! Suppose I tell you a little story ? "

There was a shout of approval, and the boys in the corridor came to see what was going on. Hearing Chopin was going to tell a story they came in and sat down, the uproar somewhat abating.

Frederic had an inspiration. He felt his way

across the room towards the piano, stumbling across a chair in the dark, then slipping quickly on to the music stool he began.

"In the neighbourhood of a dark and gloomy wood," he began, "there stood an old castle. It had formerly been strong and well defended, though it was now fallen into decay; but it still belonged to an ancient family, and hidden in its inmost chamber was a large chest full of rare and precious jewels."

While speaking thus he was improvising an accompaniment—strong heavy chords for the old castle, arpeggios for its decay, and trills and appoggiaturas for the sparkling jewels. The boys, though still tittering, were now attentive to the story.

"The wood," continued Frederic, "was inhabited by a band of robbers, who determined to lay hands on this treasure. One moonless night they started forth, and in deathly silence crept along, carrying with them dark lanterns, pistols, long ladders and large sacks. Nearer and nearer they came to the old castle. . . ."

This section was illustrated by a march, begun *pianissimo* and getting louder and louder. . . .

" . . . they put up the ladders, scrambled up the walls . . ." more laughter at the scrambling on the piano . . . "and without much difficulty found the jewel chest. Immediately they filled their sacks, and had hardly done so when a strange noise alarmed them. . . ."

Strange indeed, for Frederic was putting one of his elbows on the keys.

"They rushed away and fled with all haste down the ladders, disappearing into the wood with their plunder. . . ."

Brilliant descending scale passages. . . .

"Having reached safety, they sat down and divided the booty; and then, exhausted by the night's work, the whole robber band fell fast asleep. . . ."

And now he began the most dulcet and soothing of lullabies, playing ever more delicately, more sweetly, with a hushed, gentle tone that brought calm and peace. The whole room was silent except for the faint, rocking melody. . . .

"I think you can light the lamp again now, Pan Barcinski," said Frederic suddenly, in a matter-of-fact voice. "I believe I heard Papa come in. . . ."

It was not long after this episode that Barcinski told Nicolas he had been offered a post at the Polytechnic School.

"He said," Nicolas told his wife afterwards, "that he thought it would suit him better than superintending the boys at their preparation, and I did not contradict him. . . . All the same, I like the young fellow. Ask him to your evenings, Justine."

XIII

THE summer in Warsaw was apt to be uncomfortably hot and stuffy. Frederic, who had been growing very fast, and working very hard, began to droop and to look white and tired when the long June days came. The school year ended in the middle of June, and Nicolas and Justine were very glad when the parents of one of the boarders, M. and Mme. Dziewanowski, old family friends, invited Frederick to spend the summer holidays with them at their farm at Szafarnia.

Mme. Dziewanowska came to Warsaw with her youngest daughter, Lorka, to make some necessary purchases, and they and the two schoolboys were to drive back to Szafarnia together. The journey took two days; and one morning at daybreak, the big roomy carriage in which Mme. Dziewanowska had

driven to Warsaw, drew up outside the house in the Casimir Platz.

Dominick and Frycek had been ready for at least five minutes, and were bobbing up and down with impatience, half afraid there had been some accident, and that they were not after all to go. Immediately the carriage turned into the Platz they caught up their caps and parcels and darted down the steps that not a moment might be lost. Lorka's rosy, smiling face peeped out at them, the old coachman opened the door, Mme. Dziewanowska made room, the boys scrambled in, and in a moment they were off.

What a delicious journey! At first the children were all eagerness and merriment, chattering and giggling without a pause; then, as the day grew hotter and hotter and the effects of the early start made themselves felt, their eyes began to close, their heads to hang down, their limbs to feel relaxed and heavy. Sleeping in a rumbling old springless carriage is not very comfortable; it was a relief for everyone when the first inn at which they were to rest the horses and take their own midday meal was reached.

A very little stretching of their stiff limbs eased them again. They had plenty of time to eat a good meal and to explore the inn and the farm attached to it before old Stas was ready to go on. Now the day grew cooler and cooler as they drove, the shadows longer and longer, and it was almost dark before they reached their sleeping place.

They had their supper at a little wooden table in front of the inn. The children unpacked the cold chicken, bread, butter and the bottle of white Hungarian wine, from the portmanteau containing the bedding. The old Jew landlord came out presently with a jug of excellent hot coffee. The fresh air and their sharp appetites made the meal a delicious one, but when it was over they all began to realize that they were very sleepy, and would have to start early the

next morning again. By the time old Stas had piled up the heaps of fresh straw in the stable and put the bedding over it, they were quite ready to lie down, and slept so soundly that the horses' hoofs and jangling bits did not disturb them at all.

Stas woke them before sunrise, and they were glad to warm themselves with some more coffee. Stas preferred a glass of *schnapps*, and having tossed it off, told Mme. Dziewanowska that the carriage was ready. They were soon packed in and on their way again.

To-day, if Frycek was quieter, Dominick and Lorka were more excited. They were approaching home. As they wound along the dusty road they pointed out to each other well-known landmarks—a bridge, a Calvary, the spire of a village church, and at last the dark line of the wood on the other side of which lay Szafarnia.

By the time they reached the wood they were glad of its shelter from the increasing heat of the sun. Dominick and Lorka knew just where they wanted dinner, and persuaded their mother that the clearing by Pavel's cottage was the most suitable place. Here the Dziewanowskis were well known; Pavel, the old peasant, and Katrin, his pretty daughter, came out to welcome them, bending down to the ground and touching their feet. The peasants were delighted to hear of the intended picnic in their clearing, and brought out a piece of new cheese to add to the repast. By this time the Dziewanowskis were so near home that they would not delay longer than was absolutely necessary—they were soon on the road again, smiling and waving to the bowing Pavel and Katrin.

And now Dominick and Lorka could hardly contain themselves. Every tree, every green path, almost every stone, was an old friend. Now they were out of the wood, now they had passed the windmill, now they had crossed the stream, and now Stas began to crack his whip, and there was the old manor house

with its long wooden front, with M. Dziewanowski standing at the gate and Ursula only just too grown-up to run to meet them.

They were all as kind as possible to Frycek, and he was soon like a member of the family. He was fond of them all, and found in the gay family life a congenial atmosphere for his own merry fun. Yet, almost from the first morning, when he woke and looked out over the wide unfamiliar landscape, he was aware of new emotions, hitherto, perhaps, only latent, of which at any rate he had certainly not been conscious before.

The house of Szafarnia was situated at the junction of a wood and one of those extensive, rolling plains which form so large a part of Poland. Before him were cultivated fields, undulating to the blue horizon ; the view gave him a sensation of infinite space, majestic, self-contained and melancholy. He heard Lorka and Ursula's laughter, and Dominick's eager shouts, and instantly decided that he could not spend the day in jokes and giggling—he must go away by himself and become better acquainted with that great solitude, that mysterious landscape in which the only line—the meeting place of earth and sky—was veiled in the blur of distance.

He soon found that Dominick and his sisters projected a ride to a distant friend. Frycek had no difficulty in explaining that he was tired after the journey, and when Mme. Dziewanowska heard that he had hardly ever ridden before she declared emphatically that he could not possibly go as far as Sowa. So Dominick, Ursula and Lorka rode away gaily, singing and laughing, and Frycek, a small basket of lunch in his hand, wandered off, following the meandering stream, and gazing, like one in a trance, over the monotonous plain. Something, he knew not what, stirred within him at the sight, and it was only reluctantly, when the heat of the sun became too powerful,

that he turned away from it to the shade of the trees bordering the wood.

For some time he lay, musing, almost dreaming, his eyes half-closed, or gazing vacantly up at the branches across the sky. Gradually there stole into his consciousness a musical sound—faint, pure, sad—it was not a human voice—yet what was it? He jumped up and looked through the foliage; Katrin was wandering along, playing some kind of pipe—a flute it seemed, Frycek thought. He pushed the branches aside and stood before her. She stopped immediately and gave the country greeting.

“Praised be Jesus Christ!”

“For ever and ever, Amen,” replied Frycek, in the customary words, taking off his hat. “Is that a flute you have got? May I look at it? How is it made?”

“Oh, it is only a little willow flute,” she answered, holding it out for his inspection. “The country people here cut them out of the trees by the graveyard—Jas made me this——”

Frycek put it to his lips and reproduced the air she had been playing.

“Well! the gentleman is a beautiful player—one would think he had been born and bred at Szafarnia.”

“Play me another, Katrin.”

“Ah, it’s not worth while listening to me—if you care for our country music you should come and listen to my father—he has got a violin, and he knows hundreds and hundreds of songs. . . .”

“Does he?” cried Frycek. “Oh yes, I will come and hear him—when shall I come?”

Katrin glanced up at the sky.

“He will be back in a few hours,” she said, “if you would care to come to our cottage he will be only too glad to play when he comes in.”

XIV

AFTER this Frycek was constantly at old Pavel's cottage listening to his endless mazurkas and kujaviaks, accompanied sometimes by songs and sometimes by dancing. The news flew about the countryside that Master Dominick's friend was interested in music, and many of the peasants went round to Pavel's clearing, to make a display on the bagpipes or flute, or even on a bass. Frycek was soon friends with them all.

"Don't come to-morrow, Pan Frycek," said Pavel one evening with a laugh at Katrin and Jas, who were whispering together in a corner, "Don't come to-morrow, for it's St. John's Eve."

"But why am I not to come?" asked Frycek. "I wanted to see Katrin making her wreath."

"But don't you know," said Dominick, who had accompanied his friend, "don't you know that the girls mustn't speak while they're making them? It brings bad luck if they do, and Katrin could never keep quiet while you were about."

Great were the preparations for St. John's Day. The evening before all the peasant girls were preparing wreaths, and Ursula and Lorka made them too. Then when St. John's Day was come the whole countryside assembled on the bank of the stream. All the young people were there, laughing and chattering, every girl with a wreath made of rue, rosemary, periwinkles, and a few forget-me-nots and tufts of wild thyme, every young man with a long pole. One or two of the elders brought lighted lanterns and big bundles of rushes dipped in oil. At first nothing seemed to be happening—they had waited politely for the people from the big house to arrive—and even now the girls were hanging back, bashful, not daring to put their fates to the test. At last Stas cried out:

"Moriolka! Come now! In with the wreath!"

and in a moment amidst protests, laughter, and encouraging cries, the dairymaid slipped her garland, with a lighted rush in the middle of it, into the stream. Away it floats—Joseph snatches up his pole and grabs at the wreath, but misses. Casimir is quicker—he hooks the garland up, extinguishing the light, however, amidst shouts of :

“ Well done, Casimir ! Joseph, you’re out of it ! Not this year though ! ”—for only if the wreath is hooked out with the light still burning will the youth and girl be married that year.

After this first trial of destiny all was soon alive with active figures running along the banks waving their arms, the scene curiously lighted by the twinkling rush-lights, and the lanterns on the bank. It was a fine opportunity for chaff and laughter, of which the peasants took full advantage. Presently Lorka, dancing with excitement at the noise and merriment, threw her wreath into the stream. Frycek seized his pole and made wild shots at the flowers, but they were caught in a current and whirled off. Disappointed he turned to Ursula. Her wreath was just launched, and he was too late to catch it before the light went out and the wreath disappeared.

“ Katrin ! ” he cried with a laugh, “ let me try for yours ! I *won’t* be left without a bride at all ! ”

As he spoke, Katrin’s wreath slid off on its journey, but before Frycek could lift his pole, Jas had deftly slipped in his hook, and fished the garland, the light still burning, from the water !

“ Bravo ! Bravo, Jas ! Ha, ha, Katrinka, you are the fortunate one ! Where is Wilus ? He must content himself with Wanda ! No, Wanda is for a quicker man than Wilus ! ”

So the shouts and merriment went on until all the wreaths were thrown. Little by little the crowd began to disperse. Jas with his arm round Katrinka, Casimir with Moriolka, other fortunate pairs seizing

the chance for whispering and coquetting—while the older ones picked up the lanterns, and started home, chanting a mournful refrain.

Frycek, watching the disappearing lights, and listening to the receding voices, felt a wave of melancholy pass over him. He leaned against his pole, apart from the others, musing, silently.

And thus it was during that pleasant summer at Szafarnia. Alternately high spirited and depressed, he could not have told why, his moods of solitary yearning and vague longing for something—he didn't know what, became more and more frequent. After the great harvest-home festival, at which he enjoyed himself with complete lightheartedness, dancing with Katrinka, and playing the flute for the other dancers, when Pavel was tired, he had a violent revulsion. It must be that he was homesick, he thought. He wanted to get back to his mother and Emily ; the term was soon to begin again, and in a few days he was back in Warsaw.

XV

AFTER Frederic stopped having lessons with Zywny he played and improvised perhaps even more than before, but he did not write much music down. He told Louise that there was no sense in it. What he wrote was not worth keeping ; it was only worth criticizing, and if there was no one to criticize, the whole thing was a waste of time. He had better be improvising, or practising those wretched extended harmonies. The consequence of this conversation was that a few days later Nicolas asked his son if he would like lessons in composition. Frederic was in a black mood, and answered gloomily :

"I don't know."

"I thought you felt you wanted some help in your music."

"It it's to *be* help," gruffly.

"I don't understand you, my son." Nicolas was surprised and hurt at the way his suggestion was taken. "I was going to ask Elsner to give you lessons, but, of course, if you don't care about it . . ."

"Elsner!" Frederic looked up eagerly, his whole expression changed. "Oh, if *Elsner* would teach me, Papa, it would be splendid! I thought you meant old Kolberg, or someone like that. . . . But do you really think Elsner would?"

Nicolas was not at all sure himself. But seeing that Frederic really did care about it, he lost no time in seeing Elsner and putting the matter before him.

Elsner hummed and hawed a good deal, and said he was very busy—what with the Conservatoire, his private pupils and his own composition—still, he understood Herr Zywny thought highly of the lad, and Herr Chopin was an old friend . . . well, he would try and squeeze in a few lessons . . . but they must not be vexed if he could not go on after Easter.

A month later Nicolas met Elsner in the street and asked, rather timidly, how his son was getting on. The composer stopped and flung up his hands.

"It's simply astonishing the pace at which he learns," he declared. "The merest suggestion—the faintest hint he seizes on instantly—no need of hammering the simplest principles into his head as one must with most of them. And then, even rarer than that, dear Herr Chopin, he has ideas of his own; he's actually original—ah! the rarest, most delicious quality in the world! In fact—to tell you the truth—the boy is a genius!"

Nicolas laughed heartily at the enthusiastic exaggeration; but he could not help telling Justine. She did not laugh at all, but listened with shining eyes, and

Nicolas smiled again, this time over a mother's accessibility to flattery.

Perhaps Frederic did not get such good reports from all his teachers. One evening he took Louise into a window seat and vowed her to secrecy.

"I had such a dreadful adventure to-day in school. But mind—you're not to tell a soul——"

"Well—I promise. Do go on."

"It was in the history lesson—deadly dull, they are—old Dobronski just drones away by the hour—there's no listening to him. . . ."

"My dear child, do get on with your story—you're a bit *drony* yourself!"

"Oh, well, I only wanted to explain that I always *draw* in the history lesson—and this morning I was doing a really splendid caricature of old Linde . . ."

"The Rector?"

"Yes—of course. Well, Louise, it was really one of my best; and I was just putting the finishing touches to the tip of his nose when glancing up I saw Linde himself standing at my elbow!"

"Frycek! how perfectly awful! What happened next?"

"Well, you see, he's very short-sighted, and I hoped at first he hadn't noticed anything; but to my horror he asked for my book, put it under his arm and walked off. You can imagine what an agony I was in—all the morning I expected to be sent for, but not a word. When I came home at twelve still not a word. I assure you, I felt more dead than alive. . . ."

"I noticed you didn't eat anything. . . ."

"Eat! I thought I should never want to eat again! In afternoon school still nothing happened—at last the Rector came into the room. 'Now,' I thought, 'it has come. I shall be disgraced for ever and Papa will never forgive me.' The Rector advanced, put down the book on my desk and passed on without a word. I tore it open to see if the horrible thing

was still there, half fancying it might all have been a dream—but no, there it was, as I'd done it in the morning, and underneath, in the Rector's own neat handwriting, 'The likeness is well drawn'!"

By this time Louise was rocking with laughter, and Frycek joined in, but he shook his head sadly enough, when his sister got breath to say:

"Well, it turned out all right *this* time, but Papa would have been dreadfully displeased if you had been reported for impertinence."

But somehow, however near to the edge he came, Frycek never toppled over.

XVI

FRYCEK and Emily were sitting in the window seat with their heads together over a great masterpiece; but they were laughing so much that the actual writing progressed very slowly. They had decided to write and act a one-act comedy for their father's anniversary—St. Nicolas' Day—and being in an ambitious mood, had determined it should be in verse.

"The first thing to decide, Emily," said Frycek, "is who is to act it."

"Doesn't that depend on how many characters we have?"

"But *that* depends on how many actors we have—so you see."

Emily giggled.

"Well, we always have Titus—and I suppose Jas?"

"No; Jas must be the stage carpenter and scene-shifter. But there's Dominick—and Casimir and Anton Wodzinski—and Marylski, if we want him—and you and me, of course."

"I suppose I shall have to be the heroine, as I'm the

only lady ; and Dominick would do for the young gentleman—what are you going to be ? ”

“ I shall be . . . your father, Emily—a very fat, very rich, very stupid old gentleman.” Frycek had the character in his mind’s eye, and by raising his eyebrows, protruding his lips, neck and stomach, he called him up to Emily, who immediately “ went off,” as the children called going into a giggling fit.

“ You are in love with Dominick, but I want you to marry my clerk, Casimir. (By the way, I’m a town councillor—that’s why I’m so fat.) Casimir pretends that Dominick is a thief—Titus can be a comic policeman—he’s so tall and solemn—and Marylski can be Dominick’s father.”

“ And Anton ? I know, Frycek : he can be made into my old nurse, who will act as go-between to the two lovers ! ”

This time Frycek “ went off,” at the idea of Anton made up as an old woman.

“ But seriously, Emily, we shall have to work very hard to have it ready by St. Nicolas’ Day. . . . The play is called, ‘ The Mistake ; or the Pretended Rogue.’ ”

For two days they did work hard, and the comedy was written. Then Frycek took a dislike to it and went off to work at his Rondo, leaving Emily to copy out the parts and persuade the boys to learn them. She could hardly get Frycek to come to rehearsals, and though she toiled manfully on alone, she felt as if she would have given it up if it had not been for Jan and Marylski. Jan was always busy with the stage, with contrivances for hanging the curtains so that they would open by a pulley, and with making every kind of property, from a rope-ladder to a policeman’s truncheon. Marylski was equally helpful in writing invitations and programmes, and in assuring her that in a day or two Frycek’s interest would return.

Sure enough, one evening about a week before

St. Nicolas' Day, when some friends had come in to tea, Frycek led Emily aside and whispered to her :

" I've made Jadwige promise to let us have fourteen of her petticoats for Anton ! "

" Frycek ! Fourteen ! " and Emily " went off. "

" Do tell me the joke, " said Piasecki. " I'm sure it's something to do with your St. Nicolas celebrations. "

Piasecki was a well-known Warsaw actor who knew the Chopins well, and often helped the children with their charades. He was very fond of Frycek, and had, in fact, come in that evening meaning to offer to help them if they were getting up a play for their father.

" Oh ! Pan Piasecki ! Is it you ! Are you going to help us this year ? "

" Of course I am. When is your next rehearsal ? I can come in on Wednesday if you like and give you any hints I can think of. "

This and the petticoats were all that were required to re-arouse Frycek's enthusiasm. The next day, directly school work was over, he rushed off to look at Matuszynski's " concoctions, " as he called them, and ordered Marylski to get together everything wanted for the costumes. The rest of the week he tore about like one possessed, decorating programmes, hammering in nails, buying cravats, coaching Titus—doing everything, in fact, except learning his part, a detail he almost entirely omitted. And yet, on the evening of St. Nicolas' Day, no one could have guessed he was not word-perfect. His fluent improvisation saved him, or his amusing by-play ; Emily, too, prompted or interrupted, or put in a bit of by-play of her own, with an instinctive knowledge of how best to save him ; and at the fall of the curtain the gifted authors and performers, Messieurs Frédéric and Emile Pichon, were called time after time, and applauded to the echo. It was a brilliant success.

" But joking apart, Chopin, " said Piasecki, as he was going away, " joking apart, I suppose you would

never think of putting the boy on the stage, but if you did I will stake my reputation he would make a great actor."

Nicolas laughed, and said he would think about it ; and indeed his son's profession was a matter often in his mind. The boy's very brilliance and versatility sometimes alarmed him. Would he in the end settle down to anything definite and do any good at it ?

XVII

THE meeting of the Casimirplatz Literary Society was just coming to an end. The respected President, M. Frédéric Pichon, had just finished reading a delightfully satirical narrative poem, entitled, " The Pair of New Shoes," and the esteemed secretary, M. Emile Pichon, was trying to recover from the hysterical laughter engendered by its wit, when Isabella came in.

" Here's a letter for you, Frycek."

" Oh, from Titus, I expect, to say he can't come this evening, or something equally hateful. . . . Hullo, what's this ? "

" What is it, Frycek ? Don't keep us in such suspense ! "

" How extraordinary. . . . You know Javurek is getting up two concerts for the hospital . . . he wants me to play at one of them."

" What a compliment ! What fun it will be ! "

" All very well for you—but how shall *I* feel if I'm hissed off the platform ? "

Frederic probably did not think he would be actually hissed off the platform, but he certainly hesitated at the idea of a public performance at the Conservatoire. Since his school work had begun to make claims on

his time and energy he had given up going out to grand ladies' evening parties, and hardly played anywhere except at home, and occasionally at Belvedere. Besides, now that he was having lessons with Elsner, every moment of spare time was taken up by composition; and he was actually hard at work on a set of variations, and a Rondo. Playing on the pianoforte had really gone to the wall, and though flattered by the invitation, he felt it would be very unwise to accept it.

Much to his astonishment, however, Elsner was quite vexed when he said he should certainly refuse.

"I can't imagine why you should say that," he exclaimed angrily. "Aren't the concerts grand enough for you? After all, Kurpinski is going to play!"

Frederic shook his head violently.

"You quite misunderstand me," he protested. "It's only that I haven't played properly for such ages—I'm afraid I might make a mess of it. . . ."

Elsner was somewhat pacified, but still inclined to be severe.

"That's a great pity," he answered. "You should not let your gifts run to seed. Let me hear you play something now and judge how bad the neglect has been."

Frederic sat down obediently and played. In five minutes Elsner was calling himself an old fool for not knowing the boy better. At the end he got up and patted Frederic on the back.

"My dear boy," he said, "I was stupid to be cross with you just now. I thought you were becoming vain—but I see you were only doing what I am always begging my pupils to do—criticizing yourself. You are quite right—always be your own severest critic, and you need fear no other. Your fingers *are* a bit stiff, but a few hours' practice every day will soon put that right. I am sure you will want to oblige Herr Javurek; play the Allegro from Moscheles' G Minor

Concerto . . . and forgive your disagreeable old Professor. . . .”

Frederic, still puzzled by his master's wrath, and hardly understanding his apologies, found the best way out of his embarrassment by taking Elsner in his arms and kissing his shoulder.

The concert went off very pleasantly. Frederic was in no danger of being hissed off the platform; his school friends and sisters made a very enthusiastic and efficient claque, and doubtless the attractive-looking lad would have received a warm welcome had his skill been but half as great. A few days afterwards he received a curious visit as a consequence of the performance. Isabella appeared at the door of the class-room and beckoned him out.

“Papa wants you in the drawing-room. . . . Two such queer-looking creatures have come for you. . . .”

“Come for me? Fetch me my pistols—I shall resist to the death!”

“Don't be so silly—they want you to play something somewhere.”

Frederic said afterwards this was really a good description of their wishes, for the instrument was an aeomelodicon, which the two “queer-looking creatures” had invented; and the place of performance was the Protestant church, under whose huge dome the organ-like apparatus had been placed “to heighten its tone.” Nor was there any question of refusing or accepting. Messers Brunner and Hoffman had obtained the promise of a hearing from the Czar, who was then in Warsaw; they had asked if young Chopin might play it to him, and, with the hearty support of his brother, Alexander had agreed. It was an imperial command.

“Though mind, Emily,” Frederic confided to his sister, “I hate this toadying to the Russians—but I suppose it can't be helped.”

Perhaps the youthful Frederic was somewhat

melted by the brilliant, melancholy smile the handsome Alexander gave him after his improvisation—or by the precious diamond ring with which he rewarded him—or by the startling news a few weeks later that the fascinating, false, enigmatic Czar had been assassinated !

XVIII

FOR some time Emily had not been in good health. She suffered from a very poor appetite, and indeed ate so little and looked so thin that her mother was becoming worried about her. A doctor had been consulted ; he declared there was nothing particular the matter, but she was at a trying age, and ought not to be overstrained in any way. Justine shook her head at the vagueness of such advice, and complained to her husband that she knew no more than she did before. From Emily herself she extracted a promise that whenever she felt tired she would lie down and rest.

It was a hot summer afternoon, and Emily, after a very unsuccessful struggle with the midday meal, had admitted she was fatigued and had gone to lie down on the drawing-room sofa. After tossing there wearily for an hour or so she was pleased to see the door creep gently open, while through the crack her brother peeped in upon her.

“ Is that you, Frycek ? Do come in ! ” She sat up eagerly and beckoned.

The door opened a bit wider and Frycek took a step into the room.

“ Are you sure I’m not disturbing you ? ” he still hesitated, and spoke very gently.

“ No, indeed not. It is so tedious lying here. . . .

I have been hoping you might come and play to me."

"You are certain you can bear the noise?" He took a step forward and waited.

"As if your playing were ever noisy! *Do* come in."

"And . . . would you mind *very* much if Titus came, too? I want particularly to play him something, for his opinion . . . but I can wait if you'd rather. . ."

Emily laughed.

"Don't be absurd, Frycek. I'm not dying. Of course Titus can come in. What is it you're going to play?"

Before answering Frycek called to Titus, who had been waiting in the passage, that he could come in. Then he went up to the sofa and showed Emily a manuscript.

"It's my Rondo—it's been finished for some time, really, but I've not shown it to anyone yet—in fact, I've hardly played it properly to myself. This is the first performance, and I want a perfectly honest opinion from both of you."

"Oh, how exciting! Let me see what key it's in—C minor—and dedicated to Mme. Linde! Go on, I'm aching to hear it!"

When he finished she was in an ecstasy; she clapped her hands and her eyes sparkled with delight, and finally she jumped up and embraced him fervently, almost trembling with excited pleasure. He could not help being gratified at her rapture, but when she was a little calmer he turned rather anxiously to Titus, for Titus was a critic he believed and respected.

Woyciechowski had been silent during Emily's exclamations; he had taken up the manuscript and was now so deep in its pages that it took Chopin's voice and elbow to attract his attention.

"What I think of it?" he replied at last. "H'm . . . have you shown it to Elsner?"

"No. I told you I hadn't shown it to anyone."

"Then I would, if I were you."

"Yes, I daresay ; but what do you think about it ? "

"Well"—very slowly and deliberately—"I think it's quite good enough to publish—why don't you ask Elsner to take it to Brzezina ? "

"No—*really* ? "

"Do you mean Brzezina would *publish* something by Frederic ? "

Emily was incredulous ; Frederic only wanted an assurance that his friend meant what his own heart had told him might be.

"Ask Elsner," was the reply ; and with that both brother and sister had to be satisfied.

After this whenever Frederic came back from a music lesson Emily asked whether he had *done it* ; and one evening he answered nervously that he had, and wished Titus had not made him do anything so silly. But from the next lesson he returned on such winged feet, with such a flush on his cheek, such a sparkle in his eye, that Emily flung herself into his arms with a shriek crying :

"He will publish it ! I know he will publish it ! "

"Emily ! Frederic ! What is the matter ? Who will publish what ? "

The whole family was so eager to hear the news that it was a little time before Frederic could speak.

"I showed my Rondo to Elsner, and he took it to Brzezina, and Brzezina says he will publish it."

The rejoicings and enthusiasm of the affectionate parents and sisters were the sweetest, most delicious appreciation he ever knew.

"How strange it is !" he thought. "One writes only for oneself—because one *must*, because it is such happiness to think in sound—to feel in music—and then one finds that the opinion of others is so important—but, of course, that is only because *the others* are those whom one loves and who love back. . . ."

And when the actual printed sheets arrived ! What a thrill to see them look so like *real* music by *real*

composers ! How surprisingly clever it looks—not in the least like anything I have had a hand in ! Yet how amusingly familiar it is—what fun to find a misprint—those stupid printers—but how tiresome after all—people will think me *too* silly—not that anyone will ever look at it—except Mamma and Papa, and Louise and Isabella and Emily—and *what* fun to write their names on the sheets and give them to each one in exchange for a kiss and a smile, and from Emily a clasp tight enough to throttle !

Make the most of it, young composer ! Though you publish seventy masterpieces, though you are renowned all over Europe as brilliant teacher, incomparable virtuoso, exquisite composer, though great musicians adore you, though beautiful princesses fall on their knees at your feet, *that* happiness will never come again.

XIX

“ *Leise, leise, du fromme Weise. . . .* ” Titus, Kolberg, and Frederic were walking home together after the first performance of the *Freischütz* at the Warsaw Opera House.

“ Yes—it’s a splendid piece of work—wonderfully melodious—how I should like to take the part of Elsa ! ‘ *Leise, leise . . . !* ’ ”

“ Well, sing ‘ *leise, leise,* ’ then, or we shall be arrested. I hope when you do take the part, Frederic, you won’t mangle the coloratura like *die Meyer*. ”

“ Now what *I* like about it is its fire—from the splendid opening chorus to the end it’s all energy and life—no *chevilles*. ”

“ It’s a good subject for an opera. ”

“ H’m. I was just going to say the subject was its weakest part—witches and magic ! ”

"Huntsmen—love—a storm—splendid opportunities, you cold-blooded Titus."

"I shall compose an opera on Krakus and Wanda, with the most wonderful symphony during the fight between Krakus and the dragon."

"Splendid, Kolberg! Fine trombone effects for the dragon's side of it!"

"You'd take the dragon's part more efficiently than Elsa's, Frederic!"

"Now look here, Kolberg, it's better than the Gazza Ladra, isn't it? The Freischütz, I mean."

"Well, it's on a much bigger scale . . . but I think Rossini's a better composer than Weber, all the same."

"Only Weber's compositions are better, eh?"

"No, no, Chopin; and anyhow I prefer '*Di piacer il cor balzar*' to '*Leise, Leise*.'"

The boys had now reached the Casimir Platz where they separated. Frederic let himself in and went upstairs. But he was too much excited to go straight to bed, and he felt his way to the deserted school-room. He opened the window and looked out at the stars. . . .

"Beautiful things—why are you so far away? Is it *that* that makes you beautiful? Oh, how I long, how I *long* for something—something as beautiful as you. . . . I want to bury myself in it—smother myself in it—something . . . I suppose that means a woman—a beautiful woman . . . there's nothing in the world as beautiful as a woman, I suppose . . . or perhaps a tune. . . ."

He turned to the piano and began to improvise. Suddenly he got up impatiently and went back to the window.

"No; that's no use. It's all second rate—imitation of old stuff that isn't really *me* at all. I believe there's some quite different kind of music, if I could only find it, that would be right—something like that

mazurka Pavel played at Szafarnia—how did it go? . . .”

He thought for a time and then sat down again at the piano. He recovered Pavel's mazurka quickly enough and then began to elaborate it; harmonies, rhythm, ornaments, he twisted and altered, trying first one modification and then another—nothing pleased him. Broad daylight found him playing Pavel's original version, and muttering to himself that *he* couldn't improve on it.

His mother thought he looked very white the next day.

“What do you think, Nicolas? Isn't he over-working? He does such a lot at his music, as well as his school work.”

“Yes, I think he is doing a good deal. . . . I don't quite know what to do about it. . . . I don't like to suggest leaving the music alone for a bit—there would be such an uproar. . . . What do *you* think about it, my love?”

“How would it be to take him right away from everything, to Reinerz with Emily? As we are going it seems rather a chance, doesn't it?”

“Yes, it would be quite a good plan—only I don't think you ought to go alone with two children, neither of them in good health; you had better take Louise as well.”

“And leave you with Isabella? She will manage very nicely. Then that is settled; I will write for two more rooms.”

Frederic was delighted at the arrangement. He immediately sat down to a Polonaise in B flat minor which he had already half finished, and added a little trio based on the air from the *Gazza Ladra*, at the top of which he wrote “*Au revoir!*” and before the trunks were packed he had finished the whole thing and sent it off to Kolberg, first writing at the top *Farewell to William Kolberg*.

XX

THE whey they drank at Reinerz seemed to do Frederic more good than Emily, unless it was that all Frederic wanted was a rest, whereas Emily's disorder was more deeply rooted than her relations or the doctors of that day suspected. She was becoming thinner and thinner, and though her cheeks were pink and her eyes bright, her mother thought she was often feverish at night, and the morning would find her very weak.

Frederic received two invitations at the end of the Reinerz visit—one to his godmother, Mme. Wiesiokowska, where he met her nephew and his own godfather's son, Joseph Skarbek, a boy of about the same age as himself. It was unfortunate that they were seized with a mutual dislike, and Frederic was glad to be able to escape to Antonin, the country seat of Prince Radziwill. The Prince was a real musician—a performer on the 'cello and a composer of considerable merit—besides being an enthusiastic patron of all that was interesting in Art and Science. He had often heard Frederic play, and had prophesied a career for him. He encouraged the boy, talked to him sensibly about things that interested him, and told him he must come again for a longer stay.

When Frederic returned to Warsaw for the school year, he thought Emily looked very wretched—wretched physically, that is, for she was quite cheerful, and as active as her weakness allowed. She had been reading some of Salzmann's tales in German, and had persuaded Isabella to join with her in translating them into Polish. She confided to Frycek that she hoped they would be her Op. I., for she was fully determined to carry out the promise she had made on the day he had transformed her into Emile Pichon. Meanwhile, the work progressed slowly, for she was only fit for it for a very short time every day.

Frederic did not often go to Belvedere now. Since

the accession of Nicolas I and the Decembrist rising in St. Petersburg, in which so many Poles were involved, he had felt an increasing reluctance to have any dealings with the Russians, and Princess Lowicka would not press any of her compatriots to visit the unhappy household. Towards Christmas, however, he was sent for, and returned, to the surprise of his family, in high feather.

"Have you seen Count de Moriolles' daughter?" he inquired eagerly, directly he came in. "She's the most charming creature you can imagine—brown curls as thick as my arm and the merriest blue eyes!"

Isabella looked up from her work and laughed a trifle bitterly. (Isabella and Barcinski had had a quarrel the day before, and she was full of cynicism and pessimism.)

"So Frederic has begun to notice the ladies! And a nice lot of love affairs he will have!"

"Love affairs! Don't be absurd! Just because I said Countess Alexandrine was charming! Besides—even if I *were* in love with her I don't see why I shouldn't be—you are not to have a monopoly in love affairs, Mademoiselle!"

Frederic generally gave as good as he got in these little family squabbles; Isabella rather wished she had not spoken. To everyone's surprise, Emily, who as a rule stood by Frycek through thick and thin, came to her sister's rescue.

"Frederic is much too young to be falling in love," she said very gravely. "Love is for grown-up men."

Justine looked at her quickly and saw an expression that made her heart contract. The shining, dilated eyes were gazing away from them all as if *she* saw into regions invisible to the others. . . .

Nearer and nearer those unseen regions came. The winter was a painful one, with increasing cough

and continued wasting. To each other they spoke always hopefully of the spring, and how the milder weather would certainly bring an improvement, but by the time March was over, her weakness was keeping her in bed, and it began to be clear that even sun and heat could do but little for her. Frederic, with the inexperienced optimism of youth, still reckoned confidently on her rapid recovery, and one day was speaking cheerfully to Louise about taking Emily to Szafarnia in the summer. To his horror Louise burst into tears.

"What's the matter, Louise? D'you mean . . . ? You don't think she . . . ? Oh, no . . . Oh, no . . ."

He watched Emily now with agonized eyes that noticed every shade of difference, his whole being oscillating between despair and confidence in a manner painfully distressing to his mother and elder sisters. A feverish attack would reduce him to white-faced horror; when the fever abated he announced that she was convalescent. The swinging temperatures that were characteristic of her disease, swung his soul in opposition from Hell to Heaven.

"What sort of night?" he crept to the door in the morning and asked Isabella, who had been sitting up with her mother.

"Bad, I'm afraid. She's been very feverish—delirious part of the time. She's better now—quite quiet again. Mamma's lying down."

Frederic groaned. *Must* it be? . . . But no, it was impossible . . . people never actually *died*. . . .

In the evening he went to sit with her; she liked to have him there and would occasionally ask after his doings at school, and listen to a short account of his day. To-night, however, she seemed too uncomfortable to attend to him—she complained of a headache and kept on asking for something to drink. Suddenly, to Frederic's terror, she sat up in bed and began to sing in a high clear voice:

"Plaisir d'amour

Ne dure qu'un moment. . . ."

"Jadwige," he gasped, "go and fetch Mamma—this is awful——"

"Chagrin d'amour

Dure toute la vie. . . ."

He stared horror-struck: was this Emily? this strange being with that wild light in her eyes, singing in such a piercing voice—a voice he had never heard before?

Mamma came hastily in and went up to the shaken little body.

"Lie down, my love, you will catch cold. . . ."

The singing stopped; the room was quiet; Frederic began to recover himself, when suddenly the voice burst out again, not singing this time, but declaiming, loudly, shrilly:

"O rage! O désespoir! O vieillesse ennemie,

"N'ai-je donc tant vécu que pour cette infamie?"

In the middle of her coaxing and soothing Emily, Mamma glanced round and saw Frederic's ashen face. . . .

"Go away, my darling," she said. "You can't do any good. Jadwige will give all the help I want. . . ."

Half an hour later Louise found Frederic alone in the empty schoolroom, shivering and gasping with sobs. It seemed to him as if now for the first time he realized. . . .

She petted and comforted him; she fetched him some coffee, and finally she put him to bed as if he had been a baby and watched him fall asleep. The next day he went to his father and begged to be let off school, and Nicolas, who thought the end might come at any time now, nodded his head.

In the morning, however, she was a shade better. The fever had gone and she was conscious and calm. When Frederic came in she looked at him anxiously and then whispered:

"Is anything the matter? You look so unhappy . . . ill. . . ."

Frederic could not answer; he looked piteously at his mother.

"It is only, darling, that he is sorry you are not well. . . ."

She spoke—but it was a mere breath, and Justine had to bend down to catch the words:

"Wie bitter ist des Menschen Loos auf Erden

Sieht er wie um sein Leid die Seinen traurig
werden."

"Don't talk, my love; it only wearies you; try to sleep."

Not much longer now, though the day seemed infinite in its misery and dread. He sat up, till Louise told him he had better go to bed even if he did not sleep, or he would be good for nothing in the morning. He obeyed her, listlessly, sure he would not shut his eyes, but the exhaustion of his emotions overcame his youthful body, and he slept soundly.

He woke with a start; it was still dark, but Isabella was standing beside him with a lighted candle in her hand.

"Quick," was all she said; and he was out of bed in a moment.

Emily was unconscious and breathing strangely; they were all there—Mamma, Louise, Papa, Isabella. He gazed at her face—she is here still—but for how long? She is still Emily—but soon—soon . . .

Papa stood up and put his arm round Justine.

"Come away, my love," he said.

Emily was there no more.

FIRST FLIGHTS

. . . and in Time's ears

Youth's dreams hung singing, and Time's truth

Was half not harsh in the ears of Youth.—SWINBURNE.

CHAPTER III

FIRST FLIGHTS

I

FREDERIC was quite overthrown. He wandered about, like one who has lost half himself, hating the house, the town, the park, where so many of his pleasures had been shared by the one who would never share them again. His parents, distressed by his white looks, each gnawed by a secret fear neither dared mention to the other, arranged for him to leave school and go off to stay in the country with Titus.

Poturzyn, the Woyciechowskis' estate, was not far from Warsaw. Titus' father was dead, and the young owner lived there for most of the year with his mother and sister, a younger brother coming from Warsaw in the holidays. A quiet country life always suited Frederic; the open air, the lack of excitement, the companionship of Titus, were just what he wanted to soothe and calm his suffering nerves. Titus, though generally silent and reserved, was so sorry for his friend that he did everything he could to gratify him, providing quiet distractions, avoiding agitations, watching over him with a tender sympathy that made Frederic cling to him as a support he could not do without. Gradually his shattered vitality recovered; the first sign of it was his return to music, and the fruit of his stay at Poturzyn was a Polonaise in D minor—the most original composition he had yet produced.

The autumn return to Warsaw was in reality less painful than he had feared. He did not go back to school; insensibly it was recognized that he was to devote himself seriously to music, and classics and history, much to his relief, were allowed to drop. His social life revived. He saw a good deal of his former school-friends, and to the amusement of his sisters spent considerable energy in running after the young Countess Alexandrine de Moriailles, chiefly, it is to be suspected, to show his own maturity and independence. He wrote a brilliant Rondo à la Mazur which he told Louise he had dedicated to "Moriolka"; but as the work was at present not shown or mentioned to anyone else the homage remained a secret.

He spent a year in this way, playing and writing hard, and taking relaxation chiefly by visiting friends and hearing music, especially operas. In the following autumn he received an invitation which caused him so much delight that his parents gladly agreed to let him take advantage of it. This invitation was to go to Berlin with Jarocki, professor of zoology at the University, who was to spend a fortnight there at a Scientific Conference. Frederic was almost beyond himself with excitement. Lichtenstein, the secretary of the Conference, was himself musical—a member of the *Singakademie*—he had been an intimate friend of Weber's—knew every musician in Berlin worth knowing, and would doubtless introduce Frederic to them—no, he had quarrelled with Spontini—but Prince Radziwill would arrange a meeting with Spontini. Then there would be Operas, Concerts, visits to Schlesinger, the great music publisher—one would begin to feel oneself really in the great world, even on the way to the hub of the universe—Paris.

The journey itself was something of an adventure, and might be expected to be wearisome, for it took five days by coach. Frederic, however, was far too much elated not to overlook all the discomforts and to

seize all the amusements possible, and entertained himself with the oddities of his fellow passengers with complete philosophy. Berlin, when they reached it, was disappointing. The town, Frederic thought, was straggling and empty; the women, ugly and badly dressed; even the opera singers were not perfection—he had heard them omit difficult passages in just the same way at Warsaw. Nor did he get into touch with the famous musicians. Radziwill never came; Lichtenstein was much too busy with the Conference to think of anything else, and Frederic stared at Spontini, Zelter and Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy from afar, without daring to approach them. In spite of all this disillusionment he enjoyed himself. A performance of Handel's *St. Cecilia* entranced him; the new environment stimulated his vivacity, and the queer-looking men of science—frogs with bull's hands—gobblers or peacocks—stirred him to a whole series of caricatures. In fact, the fortnight, if not exactly what he expected, was full of enjoyment.

At last the day arrived on which the return journey was to begin. Frederic and Professor Jarocki were to spend two days at Posen, by the invitation of Archbishop Wolicki, and Frederic hoped to take the opportunity of visiting Prince Radziwill at his country seat, as he had missed him in Berlin. Two other travellers entered the coach with them and immediately Frederic decided they were hopeless bores, for they began an apparently interminable discussion on Prussian politics. Presently both the Poles were even more put out, for the Germans produced capacious porcelain pipes, and filled the coach with volumes of smoke. One, who wore a large pair of horn-rimmed spectacles, announced with a sigh of satisfaction:

"I shall smoke until I go to sleep; I would certainly die rather than give up the pleasures of smoking!"

Jarocki nudged Frederic.

"Isn't this awful?"

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"Too horrible for words—I know I shall suffocate——"

"Let's go outside, then—it's quite a mild night."

Frederic agreed joyfully, and at the next stopping place the change was made.

In the morning they arrived at a small town called Züllichau, where they were to change horses. The postmaster, who also kept a small inn, assured them that they would not have long to wait—only the matter of an hour or two.

The four travellers uttered a combined groan.

"Well," said Jarocki, with a sigh, "what is there to see in this noble city?"

"To see? . . . *na, ja*, . . . there is the battle-field . . ." answered the postmaster doubtfully.

The two Poles looked blankly at one another, and Horn-rimmed Spectacles declared with decision:

"In 1759 took place at Züllichau a hardly-contested fight between the Russians and the Prussians. The Prussian army, consisting of . . ."

"A thousand thanks!" exclaimed Jarocki, hurriedly bowing, and marching off with Frederic. "Heavens!" he added, directly they were out of hearing, "if we had not escaped we should have had a lecture on military tactics!"

They wandered about, but the country was flat and uninteresting and at last they returned to the inn. They entered the dining-room, and found Horn-rimmed Spectacles still smoking and holding forth about music to a mild old gentleman with a patriarchal white beard.

"I think something to eat and drink would pass the time agreeably," murmured Jarocki. "Fetch me an omelette and a glass of beer," he called to a pretty servant girl who was moving about the room.

"Certainly, sir; anything for the young gentleman?" she smiled, blushing at Frederic.

"Ah, but you should hear von Schätzel," boomed

Horn-rimmed Spectacles, "she's only seventeen and a beautiful singer. Why, in Onslow's *Colporteur* . . ."

Frederic turned to the waiting girl: "Nothing for me, thank you. But perhaps you can tell me if there's a piano in one of the rooms?"

"Yes, sir; just through there——"

Frederic opened the door to which she pointed, and found a little sitting-room with a small old-fashioned looking piano.

"My dear fellow," cried Jarocki, "you're not going to play on that?—it's sure to be an awful old thing . . ."

"We'll try." He sat down, opened it and ran his fingers over it. "It's not so bad; and in the name of St. Cecilia, it's actually in tune!" He smiled to himself, then called out to Jarocki in Polish, "Now we shall see if Horn-rimmed Spectacles *really* knows anything about music . . ."

He began with a Polish song, playing the melody simply, but with the touch that only Jarocki had heard before. Spectacles and Patriarch were silenced and listened attentively to the lovely tones. Then Chopin began to play variations—at first with the deliberate intention of impressing his audience by a display of virtuosity. In this he was fully successful. The two Germans stared at each other in amazement, while the dancing, rippling arabesques flowed out from his magic fingers. Another door speedily opened and in crept Mrs. and Miss Postmaster, followed by the proprietor himself, who could hardly believe that the sounds he heard were emanating from his little old piano. But though Chopin might begin to play with the ignoble motive of astonishing, he could not continue thus for long. He soon forgot everything but his art, and insensibly the nature of his playing changed. More feeling, more beauty crept in and his exhibition of dexterity passed into the second place. Spectacles and Patriarch quietly rose and stole into the back parlour to watch the hands of the performer; the

maid-servant joined her master and mistress, and soon of all the house only Jarocki remained in the dining-room, finishing his omelette, and congratulating himself that *he* at any rate could hear the young master any evening he chose, at Warsaw.

Suddenly, without a moment's warning, the outer door burst open and the postillion stamped in, shouting in a voice of thunder :

"The horses are ready, gentlemen !"

Chopin, brought suddenly back to earth, stopped and stared around him.

"Confound you for your foolish interruption," shouted the postmaster, startled too at the unexpected intervention.

Chopin had now recovered himself and stood up to go out ; he was received with cries of protest from all the listeners.

"If the gentleman *would* but finish . . ."

"You cannot rob us of the end of such a wonderful composition."

"Can we not persuade you to continue ?"

"But"—he hesitated—"we have already waited more than an hour."

"Finish it, finish it !" cried the Postmaster, "and you shall have my best horses—the courier's horses—for the next stage. Go and put them in, you, Hans, and no more of your noise and folly."

Chopin, thus beset and persuaded, only waited for a smile from Jarocki, to sit down again and bring his *Fantasia* to a better-rounded conclusion.

"One more !" sighed Miss Postmaster, and he laughed and played a spirited *Mazurka*.

"Fetch a bottle of Moselle !" cried the Postmaster. "Gretchen, offer a glass to Herr—ah, you must tell us your name, sir, for we shall long remember to-day !"

"Chopin—Frederic Chopin"—he blushed and smiled, and looked across at Jarocki.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, I beg you will join me

in drinking the health of the favourite of Polyhymnia ! ” And all the company held their glasses towards Chopin and cried out “ *Prosit !* ”

“ Ah, sir,” said the old man, timidly, his hands shaking with emotion, his eyes full of tears, “ if Mozart had heard you he would have shaken hands with you and exclaimed ‘ Bravo ! ’ An insignificant old man like me dare not do that.”

Chopin blushed again, grasped his hand and mumbled something—he himself didn’t know what.

Meanwhile the ladies of the inn had run out to the coach and filled its pockets with cake and wine ; the time to start was at hand ; the postmaster caught up the virtuoso in his arms and carried him, followed by the others in procession, to the coach.

“ H’m ! ” muttered the postillion, fingering his horn, and glowering at the maid-servant, who, like the others, had eyes for no one but Chopin. “ H’m ! how unfair things are ! The young gentleman is carried out by the master himself while I have to climb into my place with no help from anyone, though I’m a musician as much as anyone else ! ”

“ What a triumph, Frederic ! ” laughed Jarocki, when they were alone ; “ and did you notice that Horn-rimmed Spectacles positively let his pipe go out ! ”

II

FRYCEK leapt out of the carriage into his mother’s arms.

“ It is nice to have you back again, darling,” she whispered as she held him.

“ I believe he’s grown,” said Louisa.

“ And doesn’t he look fashionable ! ” exclaimed Isabella.

"No doubt he has grown as much in intellect—eh, my son?" His father looked at him with a smile.

"Oh yes; I can give you a splendid lecture on the habits of natural philosophers—illustrated by original drawings——"

"Oh, do let us see them!" cried his sisters, while his father shrugged his shoulders, murmuring, "At your old tricks!"

Frederic discovered, much to his vexation, that Titus was still away at Poturzyn, and that he did not intend to come to Warsaw till after Christmas. His next dearest friend, Jan Matuszynski, was excessively busy, on the verge of his first examination in medicine, and consequently Frederic, who had returned from Berlin in a highly frivolous mood, was obliged to seek for entertainment where he could. His search was the cause of a curious episode, the nearest he ever came to "getting into trouble" with his parents.

He had spent some weeks in the summer at Sanniki, the house of Mme Pruszk, a lady of position with two sons, a few years younger than Frederic, and two daughters, younger still. The lady and her husband were both gay, spirited people, who found Frederic a delightful companion, always ready to take his share in any merriment that was about. This autumn, Mme Pruszk started the idea of amateur theatricals, and Frederic, as a well-known good actor, with nothing particular on his hands, was of course allotted an important part. He, along with one or two other young men, was constantly in and out of the house, for in this light-hearted *milieu* he found just the amusing occupation that he was at the moment on the look-out for.

The night of the performance arrived. As usual on such occasions, everything behind the scenes was in confusion and several extra helpers were imported. Amongst these was Mme Pruszk's governess, a young and pretty girl with whom Frederic had become

acquainted in the summer. After the first act Frederic discovered that his jacket was torn. Rushing into the green-room to find something to mend it with he saw her sitting in a corner and called out :

"Mademoiselle ! do come and take pity on me ! My coat is all in pieces !"

She got up and came slowly towards him, and he remembered afterwards that she had looked pale.

"You see——" he went on, intent on his hole, "here it is—I can't possibly do it without you——"

As she spoke the door burst suddenly open and Mme Pruszk appeared ; the girl gave a sort of gasping sob and sank to the ground.

"Good Heavens !" cried Frederic, horrified, "why she's fainted !"

"She'll be all right in a minute," said Mme Pruszk quickly. "Here, Wanda, sew up Pan Frederic's coat——" she entered the green-room, pushing him outside and shutting the door with a bang.

Frederic wondered vaguely what it was all about, but his thoughts were absorbed by the performance, and the little episode made no impression on his mind.

The next morning, however, his father called him into his study and told him he wished to speak to him. His face was very grave, and he apparently found some difficulty in beginning. At last he cleared his throat.

"Mme Pruszk has been here this morning ; it seems her governess is ill . . ."

"Yes," said Frederic, innocently, "she fainted last night."

Nicolas looked at him and was silent for a moment. He tried again.

"It is an unfortunate affair—it seems the girl has been misbehaving herself. . . . Now, Frederic, if you have had anything to do with it . . ."

"I ! no, certainly not. Why, it's absurd, Papa."

"Mme Pruszk says that last summer at Sanniki you walked up and down in the garden with her by the

hour together . . . she says you were alone with her last night, holding her in your arms, and that it was the shock of being caught that made the girl faint . . .”

Frederic could not help tittering.

“ Holding her in my arms ! Why, Papa, she was only mending my coat . . .”

“ Well, Frederic, I daresay you think it *correct* not to admit it, but to me at least you might tell the truth. I would not use it to injure the girl.”

“ Wait a moment.” Frederic began to see the serious side of the affair, and to realize that his position did need some defence. “ Did *she* accuse me of anything ? ”

“ No. Mme Pruszk says she will do nothing but cry, and say she alone is to blame. Which,” continued Nicolas, with a wry smile, “ is, on the face of it, impossible.”

“ I can only say *I* have had nothing to do with it.” Frederic did not feel that he could tell his father that the girl had never attracted him, or that he had a shrewd suspicion as to where the responsibility really lay. He could only hope his father would take his word ; but Nicolas was evidently not satisfied. He said no more at the time, but later in the day he told Frederic that Justine and he both thought he had not enough to do and was wasting his time. They had decided he had better give some music lessons—two pupils had been arranged for him. Frederic said no more. He was sorry his mother had been told this fable, but he did not feel he could attack the question with her. Luckily the misunderstanding did not last long. The very next day Mme Pruszk arrived again and informed Pan Chopin that Frederic was perfectly innocent. The offender was young Nepomucene Niewolski, and he had made amends as far as possible by assuring everyone he was willing to marry the young woman out of hand.

“ I do hope Frederic will forgive me,” added the impulsive lady, “ but the truth is, I can hardly believe

a woman could have eyes for anyone but him, when he is in sight ! ”

In the meantime the music lessons had been arranged, and it was in these circumstances that Chopin began to teach.

III

PERHAPS Papa and Mamma felt that they owed some reparation to their son.

“ We have been thinking,” said Mamma one morning, “ that you would like a room to yourself to work and see your friends in. There’s the room at the top of the back stairs—you can have the old school-room piano in it, and the writing table from Papa’s dressing-room. How would that do ? ”

“ Mamma ! you are an angel ! ” Frederic jumped round the table and kissed his mother’s hands. “ It will be simply delicious—I shall really be able to do some serious work.” He felt as if there was nothing now to stop him from turning out Concertos and Symphonies by the score. He took out his Rondo à la Krakowiak and worked at it hard all the morning.

Indeed, for some time he had been in a working mood. If a week passed without his completing a good piece of composition he felt uneasy. Even the arrival of Titus, in the new year, did not unsettle him, for Titus always told him work was the chief thing in life, and did not countenance any slacking.

“ It would indeed be a shame, Frederic,” he had often said, “ if with your gifts you did not produce something really worth while. With you it is simply a case of trying hard enough.”

In the spring he had two delightful rewards for his laborious winter in the shape of visits to Warsaw from Paganini and Hummel. Paganini roused Chopin’s

wildest enthusiasm and inspired him with a dozen airy, dancing melodies. The effect of Hummel was less startling but more deep-rooted ; there was certainly a bond of sympathy between the two musicians, and the months of his stay in Warsaw made them lasting friends.

This spring, then, Frederic's emotions were stirred by the music of others. Whenever he had a spare evening he would find Titus and walk through the town with him, telling him how beautiful it all was, and how there was only one other kind of beauty in the world that could be like it.

"No, Titus, don't be so severe. Just look at that girl.—Isn't she grace personified ? Titus, which do you like best, brown eyes or black ? Oh, are you going home now ?—Well, dearest Titus, give me a kiss then—don't be so dreadfully hard-hearted ; you know I can't live without you."

It was a beautiful evening in May, when the two young men went to a party given by the Countess Potocka. The Countess's son had just married a charming and musical young lady, and to-night they were to make the acquaintance of the new little Countess Delphine. Countess Delphine, it seemed, sang ; and Frederic, of course, was requisitioned to play her accompaniment. He admired her voice, and thought she was a delightful girl. Towards the end of the evening she came towards him, her hands pressed together.

"Ah, M. Chopin, you have already been so very obliging, it is a shame to ask for any more—but this is quite a special case—it is a friend of mine who is still a pupil at the Conservatoire—she has a lovely voice, but she is very shy—if *you* would accompany her, however . . ."

"Why, of course, Countess." Chopin turned to the piano and Countess Delphine followed, leading forward a girl of about eighteen.

“Mademoiselle, je vous présente M. Chopin ; M. Chopin, Mlle Gladkowska.”

A bow, a curtsy ; Chopin raised his eyes, and on the instant knew he had met his fate.

IV

HE went home and for days thought of nothing but her face. It was pale and her eyes were blue—he could hardly have said more about her appearance, but it was enough. He had been too much agitated at the time to speak to her. She, too, had seemed troubled, for after her song she merely curtsied, murmured *“Mille remerciements, Monsieur,”* and glided away. It had been folly not to detain her—speak to her—impress her with his dominating personality—compel her to recognize his irresistible force—and yet, even as he cursed himself for his idiotic loss of presence of mind he knew that if he met her again he would again be equally dumfounded. He thought of nothing else, but it was days before he could speak of her. He was shy of telling Titus, and finally confided in Jan, saying *he* could tell Titus if he liked. He sat for hours by his window at night dreaming of the delicious creature, and of himself kneeling at her feet in an ecstasy of adoration, or rescuing her from a thousand incredible perils, always without speaking, or coming near ; she was always remote, aloof, immeasurably above the highest region he could ever dream of reaching. Then one night, at another evening party, he saw her again. This time he was calm enough to observe her more closely. He saw how exquisitely she moved, how white her shoulders were, how candid and gentle were her looks, how infinitely becoming the green wreath in her fair hair. He longed to *be* the wreath—was that

too presumptuous?—to die giving one's life to increase her beauty—would not that be heaven? As he gazed she made her adieus to the hostess, and five minutes afterwards he too hurried from the bleak, deserted room, whence all that made Warsaw worthy of existence had disappeared.

He saw her twice more; but never spoke to her. Each time he vowed he would make the attempt at the next opportunity; each time, when the next opportunity came, his mouth dried, his knees shook, his hands grew cold, and he was aware that to attempt to speak to her would be to cover himself with confusion, and show himself a complete fool. Besides, what should he say? To her, so pure, so holy, so ethereal a being, what could he say that would not seem coarse or trivial? Better say nothing till he could convince her in some conclusive fashion of the depths of his devotion.

Meanwhile, except for Jan, who was obliged to listen to two or three rhapsodies on the subject, no one knew anything of the upheaval he had undergone and to all appearance his life went on as usual. One evening, in the little room at the top of the back stairs, now in perfect order as *Frederic's room*, he was playing to some friends, amongst whom were Elsner and Zywny. He noticed that his two teachers seemed to have a great deal to say to each other, but did not pay particular attention to it. He thought of it, however, the next day when his father spoke to him.

"Did you know, Frederic, that Celinski and Hube are going to Vienna next month? Should you like to go with them?"

"Should I like to? Why, Papa, I can't imagine anything more delicious! Is it possible?"

"Well, it seems you are getting too clever for us in Warsaw; it's time you showed yourself off to grander folk."

"Oh, Papa, now you're teasing!"

"No, seriously; Elsner thinks it would be good for you to go further afield, and make acquaintances in musical cities. He thinks you ought to go and see Haslinger, the music publisher, for instance. No doubt he's right, that a personal interview will often do more than many letters and manuscripts. So if you would like it, I will manage it for you."

"You are too good, Papa. I can never thank you enough for all you are doing . . ."

But there was one terrible drawback. In leaving Warsaw he left the town where Constance Gladkowska lived.

V

BEAUTIFUL, fascinating Vienna! Not too gay to be sentimental, and not too sentimental to be gay, where art, fashion and love are inextricable, where the greatest music wins true appreciation, and the lightest receives perfect interpretation! What a place it was for a young musician of 1829, in love, and on the threshold of fame, to come to, see, and conquer!

Chopin was determined not to lose his head, but to be very prudent and practical. His first visit, therefore, was to Haslinger, to whom he had already sent, through Elsner, a Sonata and a set of Variations. He could not help laughing at himself for feeling so like a schoolboy going in to see the head master, and tried to buoy himself up by inward protests that the day should come when *he* would be the great man, and the publishers would come to him begging for his works! Haslinger, when he actually received him, was not at all like a schoolmaster. He was very friendly, apologized for his wife's absence from Vienna, and told him he had heard much of his playing.

"Are you thinking of giving a concert here, Herr Chopin?" he asked, after a while.

"I! here, in Vienna! Where Mozart, Beethoven and Moscheles have been heard! Not I, indeed!" Chopin was really startled at such an idea having entered anyone's head.

Haslinger smiled.

"That is a very proper modesty, I'm sure," he remarked. "But after all, Mozart and Beethoven are dead, and we should be badly off if no one but Moscheles would give concerts in Vienna! The fact is, my dear sir, works for the pianoforte always sell better when the composer has performed them in public—especially works such as yours, full of difficult bravura passages. Excuse my commercial point of view—you should really think it over."

Chopin shook his head.

"I assure you I should never have the courage."

"Well," said Haslinger, "we must see. Now, I daresay you would like to look at some of our music—here, for instance, is a volume of my series; the Odeon, works for the piano, by well-known pianists, and it is in this series that I wish to bring out your Variations—but then, you must become a 'well-known pianist,' you see!"

Chopin was beginning to feel dazzled. He picked up the volume Haslinger held towards him, and carried it to the window, as much to conceal his excitement as to examine the composition. Haslinger left him alone, and when in a little while Chopin took up his hat to go, asked him to come to his house that evening.

Two other gentlemen were present in the drawing-room when he arrived; Blahetka, a journalist, and Count Gallenberg, the Director of the Kärnthnerthor Theatre, and husband of Beethoven's Giulia Guicciardi. To him Haslinger presented Chopin as "a coward, who is afraid to play in Vienna," and added, "you will at any rate play to us here?" This was impossible to

refuse ; Chopin found the instrument a good one, and quite enjoyed himself, while he electrified his audience, who had not expected anything like what they heard. Haslinger and Blahetka declared his timidity was quite misplaced, and Count Gallenberg exclaimed with marked eagerness :

“ Come, Herr Chopin, you must not deny us. Let us have the pleasure of hearing you—the Kärnthnerthor Theatre is entirely at your disposal for any evening on which it is not engaged—I assure you, you need have no fears as to your reception.”

“ You are all that is polite—but indeed I am quite out of practice—on a journey you know, one cannot keep one’s hands in good condition. I should feel I was not doing myself justice—I beg you not to press it.” He was beginning to feel agitated at the very idea, and his host, soon perceiving this, hinted to the others that it was better not to urge him any more.

The next day he had lunch with an old Polish gentleman, Count Hussarzewski. There was a large party present, amongst whom were Blahetka and his daughter, herself a fine pianist, and two manufacturers of pianos, Stein and Graff. After lunch Chopin was of course asked to play, and again, when he finished, all his audience surrounded him, begging him to give a concert. It seemed a positive conspiracy ; he did not know how to answer, feeling almost dazed by the unanimity of their enthusiasm, and beginning to wonder whether it was foolish and obstinate to go on refusing. What perhaps shook him most was the fact that both Herr Stein and Herr Graff led him aside one after the other and asked if they might send a piano to his rooms for his use during his stay in Vienna, Herr Stein being particularly pressing and friendly in his obliging offer.

“ There must be something in it,” thought Chopin, “ or these two commercial gentlemen would not press their goods on me. Well—what ought I to do now, I

wonder ? What would Elsner think of it ? I can't go to Gallenberg and say I've changed my mind . . . I suppose if he really wants me he'll communicate with me later."

The pressure continued to be put on him by Graff and Stein, who wanted their pianos advertised, Haslinger who wanted his publications puffed, Blahetka who wanted copy, and Gallenberg who wanted his theatre filled. They were helped by Würfel, a conductor, who admired Chopin's compositions and playing, and thought he would be foolish not to seize the opportunity of making them known to musical Vienna. At last the combination of interested and disinterested advice took effect ; the concert was decided on.

There was a terrific rush. The decision was made on Saturday and the Concert was to be on Tuesday. Programmes, Advertisements, Tickets, Press Notices, Rehearsals—all connected with it lived in a whirl till the thing was over. Würfel and Gallenberg told Chopin he ought to play the Variations on *La ci darem*, and the Rondo à la Krakowiak, and the Orchestra parts were sent out to the members of the band. On Monday morning Chopin, feeling rather nervous, went round to the Kärnthnerthor Theatre for a rehearsal, and found himself in the middle of pandemonium. While half the orchestra were tuning up, the other half had their heads together and were buzzing like an angry hive ; Gallenberg, Würfel, and Demmer, the Manager of the Theatre, were in agitated converse in the auditorium—it was obvious that something had gone wrong.

When Chopin appeared Gallenberg went up to him.

"It's most unfortunate," he began, "I'm afraid there's something wrong with the band parts, Herr Chopin—the orchestra say they can't read them."

Chopin looked aghast. Perhaps his youthful, helpless appearance touched some of the performers, for the leader called out, rather crossly, it is true :

"The Variations are all right, Herr von Gallenberg; we can manage them, I think."

Gallenberg sighed with relief.

"Then, gentlemen, let us begin."

But immediately Würfel moved towards the platform the buzzing broke out afresh.

"Not Würfel—we won't have Würfel," the words, though half muttered were quite intelligible, and Würfel, looking a trifle sheepish, told Gallenberg he'd better leave it alone. Chopin had by this time sat down at the piano, and was watching the dispute unhappily. There was some more muttering and at last Gallenberg called out:

"Herr Chopin, do you mind if the leader of the orchestra conducts the Variations?"

Chopin felt that nothing mattered—if everybody was angry, how could they play or listen at all?

"Certainly, certainly—shall we begin?"

The Variations were played through without a stop, and Chopin took up the Rondo. The violinist stood up.

"We can't play this—the figures are not put right, and there are no end of mistakes in the copying—why, the violin parts haven't even got the same number of bars."

Chopin hung his head in acute misery.

"Couldn't you at any rate *try* . . . ?" asked Demmer.

The leader shrugged his shoulders, took up his bow grumpily and said, "*Na, also*," and they began. It was shocking. They had to stop twice, argue, begin again, struggle on in confusion and reach the end one on the top of the other.

"You see——" said the leader, and Chopin heard a horn whisper, "Why should we make fools of ourselves to minister to this young fop's vanity?"

Good God! Could anything be more awful? What could he do? The whole thing was madness—he had known all the time it would be folly to attempt a concert . . .

"But what is to be done . . . ?" Gallenberg's plaintive voice sounded from a great distance. Life was terrible; the world was drowned in a black fog of despair. He should go home and send word on Tuesday that he was ill . . . dying . . . very likely it would be true . . .

"Herr Chopin!" Demmer called out loudly from the auditorium, "you must improvise something to-morrow—play a 'Free Phantasy on Polish Airs,' or something of that sort."

The horn turned round and looked at Chopin sharply.

"Excellent! Excellent!" exclaimed Gallenberg. "You will do that, won't you, Herr Chopin! It'll be the very thing!"

"Very well," said Chopin faintly. He felt a murmur go through the members of the orchestra, and saw them turning to stare at him, but he was too miserable to heed them. He excused himself quickly to Würfel and Gallenberg and rushed back to his rooms where he hid himself for the remainder of the day.

A sleepless night did not improve his spirits; but towards twelve o'clock a young Nidecki, a Polish friend already established in Vienna, came round and seeing his pale face and melancholy expression, he took him off to a neighbouring café and saw that he had a good meal.

"No, I'm not nervous," said Chopin, "only it seems the figures on the band parts were put in the wrong place—all my fault, of course—and the band are furious with me."

"The band!" exclaimed Nidecki scornfully, "who cares for them! Let me have the parts and I'll copy them for you, and never mind what they think—it's only envy or stupidity."

Half-past seven. Still depressed—perhaps nervous, though he denied it firmly, Chopin arrived at the

green-room of the Theatre. It was a small room and seemed full of people.

"Herr Lachner—Fräulein Weltheim——"Gallenberg was introducing him to his colleagues. Lachner—the great Lachner—friend of Schubert—almost immediately went off to conduct the Prometheus Overture with which the Concert began. Fräulein Weltheim tried to make conversation to cheer the young man up, but he was occupied in wishing that she were Constance and regretting his folly in agreeing to play in Vienna. All too soon Lachner returned.

"Now, Herr Chopin——" and he entered the stage.

The auditorium was not very full, but from it a voice cried "Bravo!" which was somewhat reassuring. As he sat down he noticed at his side a painted young man who had been in the green-room and had whispered insinuatingly something about Moscheles, Hummel and Herz. He was evidently going to turn over for him. The tutti began before he expected it and the next moment he was engulfed.

He had certainly played well, and had been well received. The orchestra, he thought, were still cross, confound them. . . . Fräulein Weltheim was singing—if only he could have been listening to his angel—and now he must go on again and improvise.

When he had finished and was bowing to the enthusiastic audience he noticed with pleasure that the orchestra was applauding—then after all it was a success—he had not disgraced himself—he bowed especially to them, and smiled, a charming, seraphic smile that made the horn give an extra clap. In the green-room all his friends rushed round him, congratulating and complimenting. The painted young man brought him a glass of sugar and water and lisped:

"For Moscheles I have turned over, for Hummel, for Herz, and now for Frederic Chopin. . . ."

The concert was over.

VI

Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coute. The concert had really been a success; everyone was pleased, Chopin was complimented by many of the most distinguished musicians of Vienna, and the only adverse criticism reported by his friends in the audience was that of a lady who had observed, "It is a pity the young fellow has not a better *tournure*!" It was, consequently, not difficult to persuade him that he had better give another concert, just in case ill-natured and ill-informed people in Warsaw should say the first had been such a failure he was afraid to.

The second concert was fixed for the following Tuesday. Demmer specially begged for the Rondo à la Krakowiak to be included in the programme, and Nidecki, true to his promise, got the parts copied in such a way that the band had no longer any grounds for complaint. Chopin spent the intervening days chiefly in visiting other musicians, especially Leopoldine Blahetka, who, about the same age as himself, was already famous. He could not help feeling flattered by her attentions, and her praise was necessarily so much more discriminating than that of unprofessional admirers that it was not surprising that he enjoyed it more.

"It is the delicacy of your touch," she said one evening, "that is so exquisite—it has a *moving* quality in it—I don't know how to describe it—it seems to make the overtones of the heart vibrate in sympathy."

Chopin thought she described it very well.

Count Lichnowsky, the friend of Beethoven, was not quite of the same opinion.

"I am glad to hear that you are giving a second concert," he said to Chopin. "And I hope you will allow me to lend you my grand pianoforte for the occasion. It has a peculiarly full, resonant tone, and

I feel that on it you will do yourself more justice than on the instrument you used before."

Chopin bowed low and expressed his gratitude: afterwards in private he told Nidecki that it was all nonsense.

"It is my method to play softly," he said, "it's nothing to do with the piano. Graff's instrument is beautiful, and I shall certainly not *thump* like these Germans."

This time all went off pleasantly. At the rehearsal there was no friction, at the concert itself there was a bigger audience, the Rondo was a great success, and Chopin was called back on to the stage to bow twice. As he got into bed that night he felt as if he were in a dream. He had been only two weeks in Vienna—the great Vienna—and she was already won! This was indeed a laurel to lay at the feet of his lady!

He had only one more week before starting on his return journey, which was to be made through Teplitz, Dresden and Prague. He visited the editor of a newspaper, who promised him favourable reviews, he visited Haslinger who promised to publish his Variations in five weeks, and all too soon the day of departure arrived. The coach started at nine in the evening and he, Celinski and Hube had a farewell dinner at the Café of the Wilder Mann with half-a-dozen young musicians and friends.

"It's absurd of you to have come for such a short visit," said Blahetka, who, with Leopoldine was also of the party, "why it's only three weeks ago that you arrived!"

"Since you've stayed such a short time you must come back in a short time!" cried Schuppanzigh the violinist.

"I shall certainly come back that I may study here," replied Chopin, feeling he too must say something polite.

"You have no need to come here for that," called

out a young Baron ; and all round the table there were murmurs of agreement.

"What surprises me," said Blahetka, "is that you learnt it all in Warsaw !"

"Ah," exclaimed Chopin eagerly, "with Zywny and Elsner for teachers the greatest ass would learn something !"

Gyrowetz, who knew and admired both of them, smiled and looked approvingly at the young man, while Lachner said :

"Well, you do your teachers credit, and need not consider yourself a pupil any more."

Dinner was over ; Leopoldine blushed and drew a parcel out which she held towards Chopin, murmuring, "Will you oblige me by accepting a small souvenir of these happy days ?" He unfolded the wrapper and found a bound volume of her own compositions with his name and the date on the title page. He kissed her hands and thanked her, while Blahetka clapped him on the shoulder and cried out :

"Embrace your parents from me, my boy, and congratulate them on their son !"

But now the fatal hour has struck. The waiters are bringing forward the hand baggage, Hube and Celinski are already at the door, Lachner, Schuppanzigh, Gyrowetz, are shaking his hand, young Stein is in tears in the background ! The time has come ! The coach is starting ! Beautiful Vienna, adieu ! adieu ! or rather *au revoir* !

VII

EVERY time one returns home from a journey abroad one finds that things have undergone a strange alteration in one's absence. In spite of letters, in spite of accounts of what has been going on, one has skipped a whole chapter that the others have read, and one can never turn back the omitted pages. Besides, one has learnt and experienced so much that they can never know anything about; the gulf that separates one from every other living creature has deepened and widened.

"And yet," thought Chopin, "that is not all. So much has happened to me that I understand everyone better than I did. I love dearest Titus with his gruff, rugged reliability, the more for having met the little rouged minion who made eyes at me over his sugar and water. I respect the disinterested devotion to art of Zywny and Elsner the more for having seen Seyfried, Kreutzer and Mayseder intriguing for recognition at the expense of each other, and struggling for money at the expense of music. Countess Lichnowsky, Leopoldine Blahetka, Fräulein Weltheim have served to show the immense superiority over all other women of my divine Constance Gladkowska, who will for ever be my ideal. If the chasm is wider the bridges over it are longer and more secure."

Yet, however much his travels had served to strengthen his home ties, they left him with a feeling of unrest. His sense of the world beyond was growing, and he began to feel, somewhat uneasily, that Warsaw could never satisfy him. He must return to Vienna and there he would see more clearly what the next step ought to be—Germany, Italy or Paris—he must go further afield to seek the real world—a placid existence in a drowsy backwater could never be the story of his life.

He presently received an invitation which his father, who entered to a great extent into his wishes,

thought would perfectly meet his views. It was from Prince Radziwill, to suggest that Frederic should spend the winter with them in Berlin, living, that is to say, in the great house in the Friedrichstrasse, but pursuing his own studies and occupations as best suited him. Nicolas was delighted at the idea ; Frederic was still not quite twenty, and it seemed to him an excellent arrangement that the boy should make his first start in life under the protection of so kind, congenial, and powerful a host as Prince Radziwill. Frederic, himself, however, was not so well pleased. He did not care much for the town of Berlin, and did not much relish the thought of a patron in any form. He respected and admired the Prince, but perhaps unconsciously the budding force within him felt repressed and driven back by all that was weighty, learned, talented, dignified in the older man. When the suggestion was first made he told his father that Radziwill did not really mean it—it was only “*de belles paroles.*”

Nicolas was vexed and said he was talking nonsense ; and sure enough a little time after came a letter from the Princess naming a definite date for the visit, and begging that Frederic would come first of all for a few weeks to Antonin.

“ But, Papa, what music shall I get in Berlin ? I really think it would be a waste of time——” and he added in Louise’s ear “*Mit grossen Herren ist nicht gut Kirschen essen.*”

That evening he talked to his mother about it. When he had persuaded her that Berlin was not at all a suitable place for him to pursue his musical studies in, she soon convinced him that it would be foolish and rude to refuse all the Radziwills’ invitations.

“ Very well, Mamma ; when I have finished my Adagio I will pay a visit to Antonin. The Radziwills are charming people and I certainly don’t want to be rude to them—or to vex you or Papa ! ”

The Adagio in the F minor Concerto on which he was working had been inspired by Constance. Shortly after returning to Warsaw he had seen her in the street and the vision sent him racing home to his piano and his pen. The beautiful rich melody flowed out of itself—a cantabile not too unworthy of her lovely voice—and then came the elaborate, profuse ornaments, with which, as with flowers, he adorned the theme he had dedicated to her. A thousand times he arranged and altered and experimented, sometimes restoring after a dozen trials the notes he had first put down. The hours he spent were all full of adoration and he used to think of the Italian painter, who, legend said, painted on his knees. At last it was finished; he played it through and recognized that he could not improve it; then he kissed the first page and whispered, “I give it to you, Constance . . .” A few days later he went off to Antonin.

VIII

HE stayed there only a week, and came back enchanted with the whole family.

“You were quite right, Mamina,” he said, “it would be unpardonable to do anything the least offensive to such people. Princess Radziwill is really wonderful. She judges people by their true value and not only their birth—it’s impossible not to love her. She asked me again to go to them in Berlin, and if I go to Vienna after Christmas I could take Berlin on the way, couldn’t I?”

To his father he talked a lot about the Prince and his original, talented opera based on Goethe’s Faust, in which one of the ideas was to remove the orchestra from the front of the stage so that nothing should

come between the singers and the audience. Then there were stories for his sisters about the two young princesses, Wanda and Elise; to Wanda he had given music lessons—"Such white fingers, Isabella! quite a pleasure to push them on to the right notes!——" and Elise, who made him play his Polonaise in F Minor every day and had two portraits of him in her album.

"And which is the prettiest, brother?" asked Isabella.

"Wanda looks like a queen and Elise like an angel," he replied, adding maliciously, "and Alexandrine de Moriollles is prettier than either!"

Louise asked him when they were alone why he had not stayed longer. He laughed.

"I believe I should have stayed until they kicked me out," he answered, "only I have my Concerto on my mind. I must get it done or I shall have no peace."

Though Frederic talked of going to Vienna after Christmas he had in fact no definite plan for leaving Warsaw; and as things turned out he was destined to remain there for another year. He began to practise very hard, and this led him to write some studies to develop his technique. He found this a very interesting task, and it particularly pleased him to combine use and beauty—to write what would really be good for the hand to practise as well as beautiful to the ears of the listener. All this technical work naturally improved his playing, and by the advice of Zywny and Elsner he decided to give two concerts at which he would play his F Minor Concerto.

Three days before the first, Brzezina sent word to Chopin that all the reserved seats had been sold; whereupon he was seized with a nervous panic which lasted till the concert was over. He was not altogether satisfied with the result. The Allegro of his Concerto, he felt, did not truly please, and the applause given to his Fantasia on Polish Airs was just, he thought, to show that he had not bored them; it was only the

slow movement and Rondo that were really successful. Elsner himself was not without criticism. He told his pupil that the tone had been weak and some of the bass passages were indistinct, and advised him to procure a different instrument for the next performance.

The next performance ! By this time poor Frederic was feeling as he had after the rehearsal in Vienna. Why had he said he would play twice ? The thing had been a failure—he knew it himself—why should he have to sit in front of people for hours playing what they did not care about in a way that gave no pleasure ? He had a sinking feeling within him, and when he thought that Constance would perhaps be witness of his shame his face burnt and he trembled. Urged on by the relentless Elsner, he had to go out and arrange about a Vienna piano, then he must see Brzezina about the money, the tickets, the announcements—his soul revolted from it all, but he must drag himself round and suffer the agony.

It was decided that he should play the Concerto again, and in addition the Rondo Krakowiak and an improvisation. Miserable and depressed, feeling as if he were going to a second martyrdom, he climbed the stage and sat down. But behold ! to-day all was changed ; was it the new piano ? was it that the Concerto had been heard before and was better understood ? Or did Chopin, in spite of his nervousness, really play with more effect ? The fact remains he was a great success. The applause was tumultuous—there was no question of mere politeness this time—a voice from the audience cried “ Give another concert ! ” and he was obliged to return and bow four times ! Then, during the following days came many surprising and amusing proofs of the reality of the impression he had made. Kurpinski, the conductor at the Opera, called to congratulate him, and regret that he had not played on the Vienna instrument at the first concert.

Elsner patted him on the shoulder and said that he had done himself justice ; Jan Matuszynski had heard a lady in the audience declare that every note was like a rounded pearl.

Frederic and Louise walked down to Brzezina to find out what the total receipts for the two concerts had been, and found Sennewald, the assistant, in an ecstasy of smiles and congratulations.

" Could not say, precisely, within a couple of florins, how much was taken—so regrettable, Pan Brzezina was out for the moment—would certainly not be less than 5,000 florins—truly a privilege."

Frederic took up his gloves somewhat impatiently.

" Perhaps you would be good enough to ask Pan Brzezina to send me up the accounts as soon as convenient."

" Certainly, certainly——" Sennewald was rubbing his hands, bowing and smiling rapturously. " We wondered—we thought—would Pan Chopin excuse the liberty if we suggest that his portrait will be in much request among the ladies? Could he possibly spare us a copy for us to reproduce? "

Frederic felt Louise's hand, which was resting on his arm, begin to shake, and he knew she was on the verge of laughter. He drew himself up and answered coldly and decidedly :

" I regret I have no suitable portrait," and with a somewhat haughty bow he pulled Louise out of the shop. She laughed all the way home, and Frederic joined her.

" Well ! at any rate, I'll not have them using my classic features to wrap up butter in, as they did with Lelewel ! "

Isabella was on the doorstep to receive them.

" Do come in, Frederic," she cried, " here's a most exciting huge parcel, and a lovely laurel wreath from Countess Alexandrine—you'll have to wear it next your heart ! But do see what's in the case ! "

“Champagne! a dozen bottles of champagne from Dunst—the French pianist from St. Petersburg! Well, we’ll drink good luck in this!”

A few days later one of his school friends told him with a self-conscious smirk that he was writing a set of Mazurkas and Galops on the themes of the Concerto.

“Nonsense, Orłowski! How can you be so ridiculous! At any rate I suppose you won’t try to get them printed!”

But Orłowski smiled and assured him they would be out next week. And that same week there appeared in the “*Courier*” a sonnet *To Chopin*.

The girls laughed and chaffed him and revelled in it all; his parents wondered and rejoiced; and Chopin himself was pleased and stimulated by the excitement and praise. What gave him most pleasure, however, was the fact that everybody seemed to have singled out the *Larghetto*—Constance’s *Larghetto*—to admire most. No wonder, if with *her* for an inspiration, he were able to do something not altogether worthless.

IX

THE newspaper criticisms of his playing and composition were disappointing, for they were made the battleground between the supporters of Elsner and the supporters of Kurpinski. The Official Journal began by praising Chopin in such unbridled terms that he himself was horrified. It went so far as to declare that the day would come when Poland would be as proud of Chopin as Germany was of Mozart, a statement that Frederic described, in writing to Titus, as “the most obvious nonsense.” But the paper continued that if the young man had fallen into the hands of a pedant or a Rossinist he would never have been what he was.

The Rossinist in question was easily recognized as Kurpinski, under whose control few operas except those of Rossini were ever given. His adherents therefore quickly took fire, and an article appeared in the Warsaw Gazette pointing out that Elsner did not create his pupils and their gifts, that even the Devil could not make something of nothing, and going on to poke envenomed fun at a quartette Elsner had published thirty-five years before.

Soon after this article appeared Chopin met Soliva, the professor of singing at the Conservatoire, and a great friend of Elsner's, at dinner at the Count de Moriollles'. After dinner Soliva took him on one side.

"Of course, you've seen the Warsaw Gazette?" he began. "It's simply disgraceful to attack Elsner in such a way. Someone ought to answer it."

"Yes," said Chopin eagerly. "Why don't you, M. Soliva?"

Soliva's face fell.

"The fact is, my dear fellow, I can't. You see—I must stand well with Kurpinski . . . I can't afford to quarrel with him . . . especially at this moment, when I am just bringing out two of my pupils—they make their *début* this summer, you know. . . ."

As Soliva began Frederic felt a wave of disgust pass over him; but when he heard the words "two of my pupils" his heart stood still; he made a rapid resolution.

"Making their *début*?" he said, trying to make his voice sound vague and expressionless. "Really? And who are they?"

"Mlle Wolkow and Mlle Gladkowska—nice girls—I daresay you know them."

"No—I haven't the pleasure. I've heard Mlle Gladkowska sing, I think—quite a pretty voice, hasn't she?"

"Not at all bad. Wolkow is the most brilliant of the two, I think, but Gladkowska had most feeling."

"Indeed! You must introduce me some day."

Frederic walked away trembling. What had he done? What had possessed him? But perhaps Soliva would forget. . . . *Gladkowska has most feeling! Gladkowska has most feeling!*

That night he went to a party at Frau Pruszek's, and almost before he crossed the threshold was aware of his ideal's presence. A moment later he saw Soliva, and knew that the moment was come. Just then Mme Wodzinska turned to him.

"Well! you are a nice young man! Fancy never reserving a box for me at your concert! Do you know it was only by chance that I got in?"

"I could not suppose, Countess, that you would wish to hear me, whose playing you know so well. . . ."

"*That*, my dear sir, is the precise reason I wished to hear it—because I know how good it is. Look, Soliva, did you ever hear of such ingratitude—one whom I have admired, you may say from the cradle, and he forgets to keep me a ticket for his first concert in Warsaw!"

"Ah, these young geniuses, Madame! They're always ungrateful to their first patrons. Now *I* have a better way of ingratiating myself than you—I am going to present him to two beautiful young ladies—you'll see, he'll never forget *me*!"

"Never!" vowed Chopin, in the depths of his soul; and the next moment he was bowing to Mlles Wolkow and Gladkowska.

Things went off much better than he had anticipated. Mlle Wolkow, a lively dark-haired confidante, was full of fun and nonsense, and he recovered his equanimity to so great an extent while laughing with her that he became able to slip in a few insignificant remarks to Constance without betraying more than a permissible amount of diffidence.

He went home that night treading on air. Lovely,

lovely, creature ! Entrancing in her grace and purity ! How she turned her head when she smiled to Wolkow ! With what a tone she had protested—" Oh, Juliette ! " at some of her friend's nonsense ! " *Oh, Juliette !* " " *Oh, Juliette !* " What tenderness, what sympathy, what sweet affectionate humour she had expressed ! Imagine what it must be to be Wolkow, and hear such tones every day ! What would it be—what *could* it be if *he* were ever to hear from those lips " Oh, Frederic ! " The thought was too much for him—he felt dizzy.

He had now decidedly crossed the Rubicon ; the acquaintance was begun. Every day when he got up there was only one question in his mind—would he see her ? Every night was either a blank of aching desire, or an absorbed reconstitution of ten minutes out of the day. At General Filipeus' *soirée* she had asked : " Do you hear from Pan Woyciechowski ? Is he well ? " At Lewinski's she had not appeared at all. . . . These were the experiences that shook him to the depths of his soul and exalted and depressed him with exhausting violence.

His only confidants were Titus and Jan Matuszynski. Titus was still at Poturzyn, and received long letters with occasional allusions to the *ideal*, for Frederic was still shy on the subject with him. To Jan he talked more freely, overwhelming him with his rhapsodies, for Jan was good-natured, sympathetic, and moreover, often met the loved object in the same drawing-rooms as Frederic, and could be appealed to to say how well pink suited her, how small her feet were, or how disagreeable it was to see Pisarzewski handing her a cup of coffee. None of his family, however, knew anything of the matter. He could not, certainly, conceal his agitated moods from them, and they guessed easily enough that he was tormented by love, but somehow they never suspected that the adored one was other than Alexandrine de Moriolles, and Frederic

encouraged the delusion to the best of his ability. He felt that if Isabella were to make a joke about Constance—as she all too certainly would—he should die on the spot.

The acquaintance ripened fast. Frederic was cautious in what he said, but his looks, his tone, his eager *empressement* soon gave his secret away to his *ideal* and her friend. Constance accepted his advances quietly ; she showed him she was glad to see him, but she never responded by making any advances herself. Chopin was by no means her only admirer ; several of the young Russian officers quartered in Warsaw occupied their leisure in paying court to her ; to all she was amiable and reserved—none could claim to be favoured beyond the others.

In May the Polish Diet was to be summoned. The political unrest, which had begun with the repressive government of Constantine in 1819, and had grown with the death of Alexander and the accession of Nicolas, was fermenting violently. All the patriotic Poles were aware of the increasing secret discontent ; many were encouraging or organizing the movement, and every now and then a manifestation of the hidden forces at work made itself seen to all. At the funeral of a well-known anti-Russian senator all the students of the University appeared, leaving their class-rooms and lectures deserted for the day—all that is, except one youth of 19, Krasinski, who, himself an ardent patriot, was obliged to obey the orders of his father, a coward and time-server. Krasinski's position among his fellow-students after this episode was so intolerable that even his father saw it would be better to send him away from Warsaw. Amongst these disquietudes the Diet, then, had been summoned, and while below the surface all was rage, plotting and menace, above, the occasion was one for brilliant display and magnificent festivities. Parties, operas, concerts, were the order of the day. Artists flocked to Warsaw from all over

the Continent, and amongst the most renowned of these was Henrietta Sontag.

Prince Anton Radziwill also arrived in Warsaw for the beginning of the diet, and one of his first actions was to send for Chopin to introduce him to Mademoiselle Sontag.

"Mademoiselle," he said, turning to her, his hand on Chopin's shoulder. "Permit me to present to you a young man who will make a name for himself in the world of music. He is a pianist and a composer, already of no mean order, but he will do better yet."

Sontag had a very sweet smile, and the delightful habit of giving all her attention to the people she was talking to. She looked at Chopin, and saw a delicate youth with fair silky hair, gazing at her with eyes of fire. There was something about him that attracted her, and she hoped, somewhat sadly, that the Prince was telling the truth.

"You must play me some of your things," she said, "that is, if I can ever find a moment for you. I have so many dull visits from senators, ministers, generals, and such dreary old people, that I have hardly a minute to myself."

"Well," continued the Prince, "I will give him the Ukraine song I have written out for you, and he will look it through and put it to rights. Here, Chopin, do be so kind as to change my stupid mistakes in this Dumka, and make something that Mademoiselle will enjoy singing—I can promise you you will be rewarded if you succeed."

After Frederic had heard her sing he was sure of that himself. She sang an Aria of Mercadente with a beauty that was a revelation to him; he had certainly never heard any singing that approached it, and the only artist with whom he felt he could compare her was Paganini. There was a delicate perfection and an exquisiteness of taste that appealed strongly to him, giving him a sense of satisfaction as rare as it was

delightful. There was no passion, no dramatic fervour ; what moved him was pure beauty.

He worked long over the Prince's song, but was not satisfied with it, and felt he could not take it to her through the crowds that besieged her door. One morning, however, he received a note from her : "*Prière à M. Chopin d'apporter le Dumka du Prince Radziwill—ce matin même à onze heures, s'il le peut. —Henriette Sontag.*" So hastily jotting down one new variant of a troublesome phrase he presented himself at her rooms.

He was shown first into an ante-room, and then through doors at the back into her sitting-room. She was dressed in a light *négligé* and had a scarf thrown over her head ; Frederic thought she looked younger and more attractive than when in her full evening-dress. A gentleman was sitting in a corner of the room reading a newspaper ; the whole time Chopin was there he never looked up or spoke, nor did Mademoiselle Sontag speak to him.

She came towards Frederic, her hands stretched out.

"I am so pleased to see you—you will excuse my note ? I had some free hours this morning and thought it was a chance we might not have again. We must not lose time, however, for Soliva is to bring two of his pupils for me to hear—but I hardly expect them before one o'clock."

Two pupils ? Was it possible they were . . . ? While Frederic was taking out the *Dumka* and showing it to the singer all sorts of entrancing visions and wild hopes were coursing through his brain.

"We will try it," said Sontag ; and the first lovely notes brought him back to reality.

"Well," she said at the end. "The theme is beautiful, and I like the finale—but the middle section, *hein ?*"

"The middle section is poor—I will try again—I can't get anything I like. . . ."

"No; it is not quite the thing, I think—it is awkward for the voice too. . . . But how you accompany, Monsieur! Now play me something of your own."

As she spoke, however, a servant came in with a card.

"Ah, how disappointing . . . it is Soliva and his *protégées*—but do not go away, perhaps we shall have time afterwards."

Do not go away! Chopin could hardly believe his ears—or his eyes, as Gladkowska and Wolkow entered, accompanied by Soliva. After the greetings Soliva caught Chopin's arm and exclaimed,

"I am lucky to find you here—you must play the accompaniment—it is my duet—*Barbara Sorte*."

The two young ladies were in an agony of nervousness, but Sontag was so friendly and reassuring that they regained courage, and sang, Chopin thought, very well. And if this sounds mild praise from an ardent lover you must remember that his ears were full of Sontag's glorious tones.

When they had finished the prima donna clapped her hands.

"Beautiful!" she cried. "You are lucky, Soliva, to have two such débutantes in one season. Now go away, for I am going to criticize, and they will be shy of that in front of you."

Soliva laughed, shrugged his shoulders and withdrew; Chopin hardly breathed for fear he should be sent out too.

"Now," said Sontag, "I am going to speak candidly, for I can see you are sensible girls and would prefer it. You have beautiful voices, but you will wear them out in two years if you do not change your method of production. You, Mademoiselle," to Wolkow, "have much facility and taste, but your voice is *trop aigue*. For instance, your high note——" she pushed Frederic off the piano stool and sat down herself—"it was

sounded so," she imitated. "It should be——" and a round, clear perfect note came out. "Come and see me, and I will explain my method, and do all I can to show how you ought to set to work. Your voices are too good to spoil."

The two girls were almost staggered at her kindness. Wolkow recovered the first and stammered out some words of thanks. Sontag smiled and took a hand in each one of hers.

"No, no; do not thank me. I shall be very glad to help. Come to-morrow morning. M. Chopin, you will doubtless escort the young ladies. . . ."

Her penetrating eyes had seen that this would be a satisfactory arrangement to everyone; and she almost laughed and sighed in one when Chopin seized her hand and pressed it fervently to his lips, looking up at her with an angel's smile.

X

THE close of the Diet was marked by a great official concert given by the Archduke at Belvedere. Kurpinski, Mlle Sontag and several other famous artists performed, but to the astonishment of Louise and Isabella, Frederic was not asked. He himself declared this was quite natural; in an official concert it would have been out of place to put a beginner like himself on the same programme as such famous executants as Sontag and Kurpinski. In his heart he was glad not to be obliged to go to Belvedere in any capacity; he hated the sight of the Russians, and tried to avoid any place where Russian officers were to be expected.

Titus came to Warsaw for a few days towards the end of the session. When he went back to Poturzyn he took Frederic with him, and they spent several delightful

weeks together. Titus took most of the day going round the estate, supervising the work as it went on ; often Frederic would meet him at some shady nook and they would eat a cold luncheon out of doors. In the evening they wandered about the garden, or sat under a favourite weeping willow, talking as young men will talk, of love, politics, and the secret of the universe.

Frederic's passion for Constance had no effect on his romantic fervour for Titus. He often made love to him, half seriously, half in fun, laughing at Woyciechowski's gruff way of repulsing his caresses and embraces.

"Dearest Titus," he said, one evening as they lay on the grass by the willow. "I wish you would travel with me some day—or rather, let me go abroad and meet me—suddenly—unexpectedly—in Venice, let us say ! How delicious that would be !"

Titus grunted.

"If you really mean it, I shouldn't mind going somewhere with you—say in the autumn."

"Really, Titus ? Oh, my dearest, how perfect ! I must kiss you for that !"

"Get away, Frederic—don't be for ever bothering with your kisses !"

"What would make you kiss me ? Byzantine oils anointing my face ? or animal magnetism ? The truth is you are a heartless deceiver, and I shall make a willow garland to wear for your sake. . . ."

It was gradually becoming borne in upon him that he had lingered long enough in Poland, and that when the autumn came it was imperative that he should launch out into a larger sphere. And yet was this possible, considering how he was chained to Warsaw ? How could he leave the city of his ideal ? The very thought was a pang—what would the deed be ? At the same time, he perhaps felt unconsciously that his passion was leading him nowhere, and that it too was only part of the restricted existence which his true development demanded he should abandon. He still

went through a thousand palpitating oscillations a day—Constance's début at the end of summer was a time of tempestuous tossing for his heart—but he could not yet bring himself to do anything more than kiss her hand fervently, and murmur vague—very vague—protestations in her ear.

One evening, his mind full of the dread of parting, he went to the church of the Bernardines, where, he knew, Constance often went for Benediction. He sat down in a dark corner, and presently she came in alone, and sat down near a pyramid of candles, by the shrine of the Virgin. He saw her pure profile against the black beyond, and his heart gave a jump.

"Oh, Constance," he thought, "how can I bear to leave you! And yet I must—I must leave you and all I love, to go and die in a foreign land. I shall never see you again; I shall die in the arms of a stranger, instead of feeling your loved cheek against mine, and your tears falling on my face. . . ."

His own tears were falling now; through the mist he saw her rise, bend her knee, and turn to go out. He rushed after her and catching her up in the porch seized her arm.

"Constance!" he gasped.

She looked at him in surprise.

"Are you ill, M. Chopin?" she asked, anxiously.

"No, no, not in that way . . . but you know, Constance, I must leave Warsaw . . . how can I endure it?"

"Must you?" Constance perhaps wondered why he must leave if it was so painful.

"Yes. I must go. But how *can* I leave you, Constance, you whom I love so? . . . You know I love you, Constance?"

"Do you?" she smiled a little sadly.

"How can I live without the hope of seeing you?" He took her hand and pressed it to his lips. On one of her fingers was a little silver ring; he slipped it gently

off and looked questioningly at her. " May I ? Oh, let me take this with me ! It shall always, always, be my dearest treasure. . . . "

" You may take it—yes." Perhaps an impartial bystander would have thought she looked at him as if expecting something more . . . but Chopin's emotion overcame him ; he kissed her hand again and rushed blindly into the street . . .

Constance looked after him ; and sighed.

XI

CHOPIN's projected departure from Warsaw was, however, destined to be still further postponed. In July a revolution in Paris removed Charles X from the throne of France, set up a constitutional monarchy under Louis Philippe and infected Europe far and wide with an epidemic of risings and revolutions. Saxony, Brunswick, Cassel, Darmstadt had riots and rebellions, Italy was in a ferment, Vienna witnessed street fighting over the price of flour. Foreign travel began to look an unsafe adventure and Pan Chopin told Frederic he must stop at home for the present. Frederic agreed the more readily that passports were extremely difficult to get even to Prussia and Austria ; for Italy and France, the ultimate aim of his journey, they were unobtainable. Moreover, Constance was increasingly kind to him. She welcomed him to her side more openly, talked more freely, and quite unsolicited, gave him a ribbon from her wrist. He tied up a bundle of letters from Titus with it, and wore them on his heart, thus symbolically uniting his two best beloved. He lived more happily in Warsaw during these days and was able to undertake a third concert—the most wonderful of all, for Constance herself

took part in it. Wearing a white dress and a wreath of pink roses in her hair she sang, "*O ! quante lagrime per te versai*" charmingly—beautifully—magnificently. She had never sung better—nothing could have been more delightful.

Pan Chopin, however, though he had delayed his son's departure for a few weeks did not mean him to stay in Warsaw much longer. The reverberations of the July Revolution had reached Poland and the depths were stirring. Frederic might soon be in greater danger in Warsaw than in Vienna, and without a word of his secret fears the father once more began encouraging his son to make his preparations and apply for passports. Frederic, with a sigh, agreed. He reminded Titus of his promise to join him on his travels and when Titus had once acquiesced and appointed Kalisz on the second of November as the place of rendezvous, he delayed no longer, but made formal application for permission to travel to Vienna through Dresden and Prague. Permission was immediately granted, and with his passport came a letter of introduction from the Grand Duke Constantine to the Russian Ambassador at Vienna. Frederic stared when it came, and showed it to his father. They looked at each other in silence ; the same thoughts agitated them both, but both knew too well that such thoughts were best not put into words.

The last few days were spent in trying on new clothes, packing and leave-taking. There were many to whom a farewell visit was due, many from whom parting was painful, but to say good-bye to Constance—ah, what a moment of agony ! Chopin never remembered how he forced himself to stammer the fatal words, how tremblingly he touched her hand for the last time, how blindly he staggered from the room and from the house for ever.

"Have you been saying good-bye to Moriolka ?" said Isabella gently, leaning her head against his arm.

"Darling Frycek, I am so sorry for you—it is so sad to part from those one loves. . . ."

On the morning of the last day a surprise awaited Chopin. Elsner and a number of friends had arranged to accompany him on the first stage of his journey, as far as the village of Wola. He was much moved by this attention, and kissing Elsner's shoulder declared it was too kind—too good.

"Come, come," said Elsner, "Cheer up; now that you know we have still a few hours together you must put on a cheerful face and help us all to be gay."

No one was more fitted to do this than Chopin, and if his smiles were at first a little forced they soon grew more natural, and by the time Wola was reached the party was as merry as could have been wished.

"But who are these, Herr Elsner, standing outside the inn? They look as if they were waiting for someone—can it be for us? And surely their faces are familiar—can they be—is it possible they are the choral class from the Conservatorium?"

Elsner smiled and nodded, and jumping nimbly from the chaise placed himself in front of the choir and raised his hand. . . . Immediately they burst out in a cantata—a farewell to the Spirit of Music.

"Beautiful—beautiful—my dear master—and is it your own composition?"

"Yes, Frederic, composed for the occasion—but now come in to the inn, we have a little banquet for you."

Frederic shook his head, half sighing, half smiling and went with the affectionate throng into the parlour. Frederic himself felt unable to eat or drink much; he looked from one friend to another, gratified by their compliments, touched by their cordiality, hardly believing it possible that he himself could be the object of such an occasion. He was startled from his reflections by seeing Elsner rise, holding in his hands a silver goblet. Silence fell upon the company and the speaker began:

“ Young man, young musician and friend ; you are to-day leaving behind you the land of your birth and going into foreign climes. We know, however, that you will always love and yearn for your own country, and we have therefore thought that the best present we could make you would be this goblet filled with Polish earth . . . ”

Polish earth ! Chopin heard Elsner's words no more ; he saw the goblet through a haze and hung his head to conceal his rising tears . . . presently he became more composed, and Elsner's voice again penetrated to his mind :

“ May you never forget your country,” he was saying, “ wherever you wander or sojourn. May you never cease to love it with a warm, faithful heart ! Remember Poland ! Remember your friends, who call you with pride their fellow countryman, who expect great things of you, whose wishes and prayers accompany you wherever you go ! ”

“ Thank you, thank you, master ; thank you, my friends ! I will never forget—wherever I go this goblet and its precious load shall be my dearest treasure—always, always, till my last breath——”

And when the sounds of friendly voices calling their final farewells had died in the distance, when he sank back alone in his chaise and felt himself hurrying away from parents, sisters, friends, beloved, he said despairingly in his heart : “ This is the end. I am leaving Warsaw never to return to it ; I am bidding an eternal adieu to my native country and all I hold dear.”

XII

THE next day at Kalisz Frederic was cheered by the expected meeting with Titus. At the first sight of the familiar serious face and large, strong limbs, all regrets and presentiments passed from his consciousness, and he was aware only of the sentiments of confidence and reliance he always had with Woyciechowski, as well perhaps as a touch of the joyful anticipations most young people of twenty experience at the beginning of a journey.

The way to Vienna lay through Breslau, Dresden and Prague, and at each of these towns they stopped a few days, going to the opera, presenting letters of introduction and in general seeing the sights. Lingerings thus pleasantly on the way, three weeks passed before, on the evening of a day late in November, they reached Vienna.

Chopin's first thought was to renew the agreeable acquaintances of the previous year. He flattered himself that the favourable impression he had made and the numerous admirers he had won would enable him to arrange two or three remunerative concerts before going on, after a month or two, as he fully intended, to Italy. He was destined, however, to be disappointed.

He found that in the short time he had been away from Vienna many changes had taken place. Schuppanzigh, the violinist, had died suddenly, of a stroke. The directorship of the Kärnthnerthor Theatre had passed from his admirer Count Gallenberg to a former ballet dancer, Louis Dupont. Both the Blahetkas had gone to Stuttgart for the winter, and worse than all, Würfel, who had befriended him so heartily and perhaps appreciated him best, was confined to his room and was dangerously ill. Frederic needed all the mental support he derived from Titus not to fall into a fit of depression ; the mental support was indeed not enough

to save him from a violent cold in the head and a swollen nose that prevented him from presenting his letter of introduction to the Russian Ambassador. By the time the cold had gone events had made the presentation for ever impossible.

One evening in the beginning of December, Titus and Frederic, coming back to their rooms, were startled by seeing young Nidecki, a Pole who lived in Vienna and had made Chopin's acquaintance on his previous visit, walking up and down the street outside their door, with every appearance of agitation.

"Ah, there you are—at last!" he cried, as they approached. "I have been waiting for you for an hour. You have heard nothing from Warsaw, I suppose? . . . Perhaps there will be letters for you in your rooms . . ."

"Heard? No, we have heard no news. . . . Won't you come in with us and we can see if we have letters?"

They went in together, and while Titus was ascertaining that there were no letters from Poland, Chopin was begging Nidecki to explain what had happened.

"It is glorious—magnificent! At last our country rises from slavery! The Poles have flown to arms—the tyrant Constantine has fled, and Warsaw is in the hands of Copicki!"

"How? What? When did this happen? How have you heard?" Titus and Frederic were breathless with excitement and could hardly wait for Nidecki to tell the tale they were so impatient to hear.

His tale was the first imperfect account of the rising in Warsaw of the Polish cadets on 29th November, 1830, with the additional news that all Russian Poland was in arms, and that, for once in her melancholy history, nobles, peasants and artisans were united in a supreme struggle for freedom.

When Nidecki had told what he knew he would not stay—there were other Poles in Vienna to be enlightened, or perhaps to supply him with further

details. After hurriedly arranging to see them the next day he rushed off. Titus and Frederic looked at each other, and at the expression on his friend's face Frederic groaned.

"I must go back to Poland and join them," said Titus at last.

"Yes," said Chopin, faintly.

"I shall start to-morrow morning. I feel a brute to be leaving you here alone, Frederic . . ."

Chopin turned pale and caught Titus's hand.

"Titus! I shall come with you—I will die for Poland too. . . ."

Titus looked gravely down from his massive height at the fragile figure before him, at the white face with the large flaming eyes . . . he sat down and pulled Chopin on to a chair beside him.

"Listen," he said. "You must listen very seriously to me. If you could be a soldier I should say 'Come with me—what Poland needs to-day is a strong arm and a true heart—come and fight for her and if need be die for her.' Even if you had your own body and an ordinary man's mind I might say 'Come and die for Poland—there can be no nobler fate for you.' But, Frederic, your fighting would be of little avail to your poor country, and you have other gifts for her. She needs instead your work and your life, and to *you* I say 'Stay here and live and work for Poland while we fight and die for her.'"

"Titus! It is cruel to say such things to me! It makes me a coward . . ."

Titus changed his tone and spoke almost roughly.

"Nonsense, Frederic, you know I don't mean that, but you must see you'd be no use in a campaign, you'd only have to go into hospital within the first week."

Frederic could not help tittering.

"With a swollen nose! Yes——" sighing, "of course you're right, but I do hate it."

"Help me to pack," answered Titus, and they set to work.

It was in the small hours of the morning that they completed the preparations and went to bed. Chopin slept late, and when at last he awoke and realized what had happened he noticed a strange silence in the rooms. He leapt out of bed and looked around. His suspicions were confirmed; Titus had gone, leaving a farewell note on the mantelpiece.

"Good-bye, Frederic; I hate saying good-bye, so I have written it. Be good.—T.W."

Chopin gave a cry.

"Ah, Titus, Titus, you are cruel; I cannot let you go like this!"

He plunged into his clothes, rushed out and ordered a post-chaise.

"Where is your lordship for?" asked the post-master.

"Warsaw, Prague, oh, wherever you like," cried Chopin in agitation, "I want to catch a gentleman on the way to Prague, for heaven's sake be quick . . ."

To his impatience everything seemed to crawl, and in the long drive to the first stage he had time to realize that he had no clothes, not enough money to take him even as far as Prague, and above all that Titus was right in saying he would be worse than useless in a campaign. When they reached the first post-house and found that Titus had gone on two hours before, Chopin resigned himself to fate, and with a heavy heart ordered his post-boy to drive back to Vienna.

XIII

WHAT agonies Chopin went through in the next few months! Lonely, homesick, anxious for Poland, far from her he loved, all correspondence slow and subject to a severe censorship, if not lost or destroyed on the way, he ate his heart out in miserable, helpless longings, nor could he solace himself with his art. As spring drew on he longed more and more for Warsaw, but his parents were urgent in begging him not to return. His thoughts turned again to Italy, but soon the disturbances in Lombardy and Venice made it useless to think of going there and he began to consider a visit to Paris.

At the beginning of April he received some encouragement by being asked to take part in a concert by Mme Garcia-Vestris. He was only one amongst ten performers, singers, violinists and horn players, but he was well received, and his success reawoke in him the thought of giving a concert of his own. His parents, too, wrote to encourage the idea, and at last, after many delays, in the middle of June the concert took place. Alas! it had been postponed too long. The musical season was over, an epidemic of cholera had begun, so that very few society people remained in Vienna, and the increasing fierceness of the Polish struggle with Russia did not diminish Austrian reluctance to patronize a Pole. The concert room was almost empty, very few notices appeared in the newspapers, and worse than all, Chopin did not even cover his expenses.

His miseries were thus increased by a temporary conviction that he was a musical failure, and the knowledge that he must continue a burden to his father. For days he tried to bring himself to write home explaining his financial difficulties, but in the end could not force himself to do more than say that he was living as economically as possible and to suggest that the diamond ring given him by Alexander should be

sold. At this his parents took alarm, and Chopin was persuaded to lay the situation before them, though even now he could not bear to admit to them that his financial position was partly due to the unlucky concert.

He was now on the verge of leaving Vienna. He had been advised, when asking for a passport, to say that he was travelling to Paris on his way to England, and it was consequently endorsed: *Londres, en passant par Paris*. At the end of July he started and travelled slowly west, stopping some time in Munich, and reaching Stuttgart in the beginning of September.

It was here that the long-awaited blow fell. On September 8th, Warsaw was seized by the Russians and the last hope of the Polish rising was extinguished. Chopin's agitation, when the dreaded news arrived, was uncontrollable. The fate of his parents, of Constance, of Emily's grave, what might they not be? All the most horrible possibilities crowded on his mind against a background of impotent rage at the Muscovite oppression, and despair for his beautiful helpless country. The passions which shook him had luckily one vent; the study in C Minor—Number 12 of Opus 10—relieved his overcharged heart, and remains an eternal witness of those overmastering emotions, which like all mortal emotions, however deeply felt, were themselves so transient.

PARIS

Il faut pour les arts des gens un peu mélancoliques et malheureux.

STENDHAL.

CHAPTER III

PARIS

I

FROM Stuttgart Chopin hastened to Paris and it was not long before he was relieved of his worst anxieties by news from Warsaw. The news, though inevitably distressing, was good as far as his own best loved were concerned. All his family were well, and, his father wrote, "not in need of bread." Titus had escaped unhurt, but had disappeared from Warsaw and Poturzyn, and the Chopins did not know where he was. Jan Matuszynski, who had just obtained his doctor's degree, had been seized with illness, brought on by tending the wounded on the battle-field. Julian Fontana had fled to London, and Antoine Wodzinski to Paris, the Countess having taken Marie and her two younger sons to Geneva.

So far so good. And though the unknown whereabouts of Titus and the illness of Jas might be distressing, the news was at any rate a relief after Frederic's fevered imaginings. He felt strong enough to take out Malfatti's letters of introduction; his first visit was paid to Paër.

Paër was at this time in the decline of his fame, for he belonged to the old school; and the new school, in music as in art and literature, was already on the horizon. Still, his drawing-room remained a musical

centre, if chiefly for such stars as Cherubini, Kalkbrenner, and Baillot, like himself luminaries of a dying tradition. To Chopin, however, fresh from Vienna, to which the Romantic movement had not yet penetrated, Cherubini was a composer worthy of respectful study, Kalkbrenner, the best-known living pianist, and Baillot the rival of Paganini. He arrived at Paër's eager and ingenuous, ready to admire and gasp, convinced that he had much to learn and that these were the men from whom he could learn it. His expectant enthusiasm, together with the ardent recommendations he brought, induced Kalkbrenner to smile upon him patronizingly and invite him to come to visit him some day next week.

Chopin went home treading on air; he found a letter awaiting him which plunged him into a morass of misery.

It was a letter from Louise, full of affection and careless gossip about the doings of Warsaw. At the end came the terrible sentence: "I believe you admired Mlle Gladkowska; she is to be married immediately to Joseph Grabowski and is leaving Warsaw to live in the country." Chopin put down the letter and shut his eyes—what had happened to him? Why was there a singing in his ears? he felt cold. . . . Constance—Constance *married!*—and is it possible? How—why had such a thing happened? . . . There suddenly flashed into his mind a message he had once sent her through Matuszynski: "Tell her that I am hers to death—and that after death my ashes shall be strewn under her feet. . . ." And now she was married—married to Joseph Grabowski—and he had nothing more in the world to hope for.

II

NEVERTHELESS he went the following week, as had been arranged, to visit Kalkbrenner—for the multitudinous trifles of life still claim our attention and action, even when our heart is breaking—a bitter irony to young twenty-one!

Kalkbrenner received him very graciously, with what a less amiable observer called "sweetishness"; a manner which he himself thought gave him the bearing of a diplomat. The least time possible, however, was spent in civilities, for Kalkbrenner was anxious to show the young man his powers. He played three of his own works, and Chopin was duly transported by his skill. Kalkbrenner's qualities were indeed amongst those he most admired—his neatness and exactitude of execution, his legato, sustained tone, and in general the elegance of his style seemed to Chopin unsurpassed. If he was cold, if his phrasing lacked expression, these faults were but spots on the sun.

Kalkbrenner was delighted at Chopin's enthusiasm and showed him his *guide-main*—a bar, fixed to the keyboard, on which the forearm rested in such a way that the muscles of the fingers and wrist alone could come into play. He explained that this gave strength and sureness to the fingers, and moreover demanded the production of a beautiful tone from the fingers alone.

"But you will find it all explained in my *Method*," he finished with a smile, pointing to a thick volume on the table bearing the title:

Méthode pour apprendre le piano à l'aide du guide-main.

"And now, young sir," he continued, getting up from the piano and waving Chopin towards the stool, "Now it is your turn—let me hear what *you* can do."

Chopin blushed vividly. It had somehow not occurred to him that Kalkbrenner would suggest this, and he had not prepared anything—he could not possibly do himself justice . . . but . . . Kalkbrenner had asked it and he should not ask in vain . . . swallowing his vanity he sat down obediently, and stammering out "My Concerto in E Minor"—began.

When he had finished he looked up. There was no mistaking Kalkbrenner's expression—it displayed astonishment and admiration.

"Are you a pupil of Field's?" he asked immediately, and the delighted Chopin replied that his only master had been Herr Zywny of Warsaw.

"Well," replied Kalkbrenner, "you have the style of Cramer and the touch of Field. For a young man—untaught, one may say—you have done wonders. Of course, you will not expect to be told that you are perfect——" he looked up, and smiled, and bowed, "in fact, perhaps, I might suggest—there was an arpeggio in your last movement . . ." he glided on to the stool and began to play by memory the middle section of the finale. He was, however, soon obliged to give up this attempt to show how the Concerto could be improved, for either his memory or his fingers played him false and he had to stop.

He got up and laughed, shaking his head.

"You see, I am getting old. But bring me the manuscript, Monsieur, and I will make a suggestion or two. And you must give me the pleasure of hearing you play again."

III

CHOPIN's instinct for drowning grief drove him to make a quantity of new friends as quickly as possible, the sooner to forget, if not to cure, his broken heart and his home-sickness. Perhaps, if the truth were told, he suffered more from the latter than from the former; he quickly discovered that marriage was no bar to a platonic affection—and who ever heard of a platonic affection keeping anyone awake at night? At any rate Chopin, in the midst of his distress, continued to admire Kalkbrenner and Cherubini, and moreover speedily launched into the more modern and exciting companionship of Mendelssohn, Hiller and Liszt. These three were in the forefront of the romantic school—Mendelssohn was already famous as a composer, Hiller and Liszt were known as executants only. Chopin and Liszt immediately recognized each other's powers and spent many hours playing their own compositions to each other—but when it came to the moment for appreciation Liszt consistently outdid Chopin in cordiality of praise. The truth is that at this time Liszt was engulfed in a passion for bravura—at any rate in his own composition and execution. He revelled in galloping up and down the piano in parallel or contrary motion, in double trills, in prodigious leaps, in a rapid series of consecutive tenths—all this with no particular musical meaning, but simply from love of exercising his own demoniac exuberance. Chopin had long since emerged from the phase of virtuosity—though indeed his freest indulgence in it had been comparatively mild—and he looked somewhat coldly on Liszt's excesses. At the same time the whole attitude of the ardent Hungarian towards music was so much more in keeping with his own fire than anything he had met with in the almost extinct volcanoes

of Vienna and Paris, that he felt invigorated and inspired by mere contact with this youthful vitality. Liszt, on the other hand, could not help being affected by Chopin's repulsive attitude towards bravura for bravura's sake, and gradually mitigated, if he did not abandon, a good deal of unnecessary virtuosity.

Chopin, Hiller and Liszt met frequently at the cafés round which so much Parisian life centres. One day Hiller told Chopin he wanted him to meet a young violoncellist called Franchomme, and Chopin suggested his joining them and Liszt at dinner. Franchomme agreed—the dinner was a great success.

"Do you read poetry much?" asked Franchomme of Chopin, in the course of the meal.

"Polish poetry chiefly, I'm afraid," answered Chopin; "I don't think I care much for Mme Desbordes Valmore."

"Do you know this new man, Victor Hugo?" asked Liszt. "He's been writing plays for some time; I see he's just brought out a book of verse—*Les Feuilles d'Automne*—or something of the sort."

"For heaven's sake don't say you haven't read them, even if you haven't really," exclaimed Franchomme. "These new authors take themselves so seriously one would think they were bent on creating the world afresh."

Chopin's eyes sparkled and he leant forward eagerly.

"That reminds me, Hiller, of that joke of Osborne's the other night. . . ."

Hiller laughed.

"You know Osborne, the composer—a big Irishman? Tell Franchomme and Liszt about it, Chopin. . ."

"Oh, it was nothing, only Osborne's way of saying it made us laugh . . . we had been discussing authors and their manuscripts, and the fuss everyone makes of them, and when the time came to ask for the bill, Osborne called out '*Garçon, apportez-moi votre manuscrit!*'"

Chopin's imitation of Osborne's voice and accent were perfect and at the same time he called up before them by a slight change in his expression, the face of the puzzled subservient waiter—Hiller, Franchomme and Liszt roared with laughter, and Chopin's face sparkled like a diamond.

After dinner as the other two were going off he turned to Franchomme and asked him what he was doing that night.

"Nothing particular."

"Then," continued Chopin, "won't you come back with me to my rooms for an hour or two?"

Franchomme smiled.

"Very well, but if I do you will have to play to me."

"If you like," and they set off together.

Chopin played a long time that evening—mazurkas, a polonaise, and a great many of his studies. At last Franchomme got up and came towards him.

"Look here, Chopin," he said. "All this is very wonderful—it's quite fresh to me, and I can't profess to take it all in at once—but it seems to me that you're starting something quite new in music for the piano. I never heard anything like some of your effects before, and I believe they're unequalled. . . . Play that study in E major again . . . it's divine."

IV

For a good while Chopin had been visiting Kalkbrenner assiduously. Liszt and Mendelssohn laughed at him for it, and told him that Heine called him a mummy; but Chopin went his way without attending to their jokes. One day, however, he was startled and taken aback at a suggestion Kalkbrenner thought fit to make.

After listening attentively to a Polonaise, instead of producing the usual criticism to which the young man was now accustomed, he settled himself in his seat, cleared his throat and said :

" My young friend, you are on a good path, but you may easily lose your way. Why do you not come to me for lessons ? I will teach you for three years—that is the length of my course—and you will then be the master of my method."

Chopin was at first so much surprised that he could hardly speak ; seeing, however, that Kalkbrenner was expecting an answer he gasped out :

" Three years is a long time. . . ."

" It is surely not too much to devote to acquiring a mastery over your own powers—nor do I believe that my method can be learnt in a shorter time. After my death, or when I am obliged to give up playing, there will be left no representative of the great piano school ; if you choose, *you* could be that representative."

Chopin felt the blood rushing to his head ; he was agitated and confused, feeling repulsed by the idea and guilty at feeling repulsed. But something more must be said . . .

" I know how much I lack," he stammered, " pray do not think I am not fully aware of my deficiencies, but as for being the representative of a great piano school—I don't know . . . forgive me, but I do not wish to be a mere imitator. . . ."

Kalkbrenner was not pleased.

" You cannot, however, found a new school, even if you wish to, for you do not yet possess the old one."

Chopin twisted his fingers miserably.

" That is not quite what I mean . . . only that I have my own ideas about things sometimes . . . my own way of playing. . . ."

" Too much your own way, sometimes," replied Kalkbrenner, flushing in his turn, " if you will forgive

my saying so, I *have* noticed that you only play well when you are in the mood for it—otherwise you play *badly*. I do not think you will notice such varieties in me.”

“No—certainly—your playing is always perfect—your style is always noble and true. . . .” Chopin snatched eagerly at something to say that would prove safe and satisfactory; and indeed Kalkbrenner was somewhat appeased.

“That is merely because I have in my fingers a complete instrument; yours is still somewhat deficient—it even checks the flow of your musical thoughts sometimes. That is a pity, for your creations have a character of their own, and it would be disappointing not to fulfil your promise.”

Kalkbrenner had now recovered his accustomed suavity; Chopin felt it was the moment for him to disappear. He rose to his feet and clasped Kalkbrenner’s hands in his:

“You must not think I am not grateful to you for your offer—nor that I have not the highest admiration and respect for you as a pianist and a teacher—still, I feel that this is such an important step that I must think about it before I can come to a definite decision.”

He rushed away and home, his mind whirling. What on earth was he to do? Three years under the tutelage of someone else! No doubt he ought to learn from everyone who could teach as long as he *could* learn—no doubt there was much that was inadequate in his playing—especially when interpreting the works of other composers . . . but *three* years! . . . He oscillated between self-depreciation, which he called proper modesty, and conceit, which he called proper pride, and at last sat down to write his father a long account of the conversation and to ask his advice and that of Elsner in the matter.

Having sent off his letter he felt somewhat relieved, and that evening at dinner he told Liszt, Hiller and

Mendelssohn of the afternoon's scene. They all three stared at him and put down their knives.

"Kalkbrenner?" said Mendelssohn.

"Teach *you*?" said Hiller.

"For three years?" said Liszt; and with one accord they burst into a shout of laughter.

Chopin laughed too, half pouting at the same time, and when they could listen told them he did not know what they were laughing at.

"But, my dear Chopinetta," cried Mendelssohn, "surely you know that you play twenty times better than the mummy!"

"The old rascal!" exclaimed Liszt, "don't you see what it is? His vanity would be tickled by being able to say you were his pupil . . . and when you are recognized as the greatest living pianist he will boast, 'I taught him everything!'"

Chopin could not help being gratified by such affectionate praise, but in his solitary moments he was too sober to lay much stress upon it. He did not think that Kalkbrenner was offering to teach him out of vanity, for he knew that it was not out of vanity that he himself hung back from being taught; it was from an honest doubt as to which would help him best to bring forth the new world of music he had conceived. He waited impatiently to hear from Elsner who, he was confident, would judge wisely and dispassionately. . . . When Elsner's answer came it seemed he agreed with Liszt! He too thought that any man who wished to keep Chopin as a pupil for three years could only do it through jealousy, and Chopin smiled at the impetuous wrath with which he expressed his belief in his former pupil's powers, and begged him not to imperil their full development by putting himself under the tutelage of an inferior mind.

V

CHOPIN had tried to solve the Kalkbrenner problem by attending some of Kalkbrenner's advanced classes and then gradually letting them drop; he had so far succeeded that Kalkbrenner had not taken offence, but, on the contrary, talked of procuring him some pupils—though certainly this went no further than talk. He also encouraged Chopin to give a concert and for a long time this concert was the chief object of Chopin's activities.

He found it a very difficult business to organize. Most of his fellow-musicians obligingly consented to help him, but singers had to obtain permission from the Director of the Opera, a room had to be engaged, a day free from other concerts had to be found, the programme had to be agreed upon—in short an endless series of trifling arrangements had to be made, almost reducing the unhappy Chopin to despair.

What caused him most annoyance, perhaps, was the arrangement of the programme. In order to please Kalkbrenner he asked him to play one of his own compositions and Kalkbrenner immediately declared that the best thing would be his *Great Polonaise preceded by Introduction and March*, composed for six pianos. Kalkbrenner and Chopin would play the solos, and four other pianists should accompany them. The idea seemed mad to Chopin, but he resigned himself with a sigh—the accompanists were to be Mendelssohn, Hiller, Osborne and Sowinski.

Perhaps the chief drawback to the scheme from Chopin's point of view was the opportunities it gave to Sowinski to force himself on Chopin's society. Chopin, to relieve his homesickness, had recently been experimenting on a set of Mazurkas, in which he was embodying his ideas of how to present national music in an art form. Sowinski, hearing him one day working

on one of these Mazurkas, looked very wise and promised to bring him something that would interest him.

Sure enough, in a day or two he appeared with a manuscript book under his arm.

"Look here, Chopin," he cried. "You haven't yet seen my *Recueil de Chants Polonais*—have you? I daresay you'll get a hint for a Mazurka or two from it—it's a collection I've been making for some time."

"Very interesting," said Chopin, concealing his annoyance under an air of excessive politeness. "I'm sure I couldn't do them justice now—leave them behind when you go and I'll look into them at my leisure."

"All right . . . just listen to this, though. . . ." He flung himself on the music stool and with his large fingers began to strum something out of his book.

Chopin shuddered. He recognized the air, but the accompaniment was a vulgar and ignorant succession of harmonies that one might expect to find on a barrel-organ. He went up behind Sowinski and with an appearance of profound interest picked up the book and began turning over the pages.

"I thought you'd be interested in them," said Sowinski: "You must let me have some of your airs for the collection . . . how did that mazurka you were playing the other day go? . . ." and he began picking out the melody of Chopin's favourite new mazurkas, furbishing it up with his own elementary idea of an accompaniment.

Chopin felt his irritation rising; his ears were getting red; he rushed to the window and threw it open, telling himself he must keep calm.

"Where do you get those splendid cravats, Sowinski?" he asked, desperately.

Sowinski laughed.

"It's handsome, isn't it? But I shan't tell you where I got it or you'd let it out and Mendelssohn,

Liszt and all the rest of your fine friends would be imitating me."

While Chopin was suffocating a retort as to what Liszt would be likely to do, Sowinski had begun to improvise senseless, ugly enough stuff in all conscience, but at any rate neither Chopin's mazurkas nor Polish folk-tunes. Suddenly he stopped in the middle of a bar.

"Have you fixed the date of the concert? Did Osborne tell me it was to be the 15th of January? I suppose we're to rehearse Kalkbrenner's Polonaise. . . ."

"Yes, didn't I tell you? We have got the rooms for January 15th—I should like to get in a rehearsal about a week before . . . do you think we can manage it?"

Chopin hardly knew what he was saying—he was talking so eagerly, with the despairing hope of keeping Sowinski's hands off the piano. True, the offender stopped playing; but with one large, clumsy finger he began a meaningless thumping of one note which he kept up while Chopin spoke and he himself answered. Suddenly, Chopin could endure it no more. His nerves were tingling, his flesh creeping, his hands quivering; for a moment he trembled on the brink of flinging open the door and kicking his tormentor on to the landing—then with a last supreme effort at self-control he rushed into his bedroom and buried his ears under the pillow. At last he heard the front door bang and knew he was released.

His final deliverance would not come till after the concert, and that, owing to Kalkbrenner's indisposition, was again postponed till the end of February. Meanwhile Mendelssohn confided to Chopin that he really *could* not play Kalkbrenner's Polonaise and Chopin was obliged to find another pianist to take his place. At last the concert really came off. Chopin's friends were well pleased with his reception—Mendelssohn and all the younger musicians applauded the new star triumph-

antly and compelled Kalkbrenner to admit that there was no possible question of want of technique, but . . . financially it was a failure ; the receipts did not cover the expenses and Chopin was out of pocket.

VI

THIS was becoming a serious matter. Chopin's resources had never been great, and while he had been in Paris he had earned nothing. His father had sent him a small remittance, but Frederic only accepted this with the greatest reluctance—he knew how little, in the altered circumstances at Warsaw, his parents could afford to support him. Yet what was he to do ?

The failure of his concert to bring in funds was a terrible blow ; if he could not earn money by playing or teaching no amount of economy would keep him alive, and as he shivered by his empty stove, he began to form a terrible resolution. He must leave Paris ; America was the place where he could next attempt to earn a living. So many people went to America and won a fortune ! Yet everything within him shrank from such a venture ; in Paris he had friends, music, sympathy—America, where there were no Poles and the language was quite unknown, loomed in his imagination a vast, uncivilized desert. He dreaded the idea so much that he did not say a word about it to any of his friends—not even to Franchomme, but silently and slowly set about his preparations, delaying as long as he could, with the faint hope that some miracle would save him at the eleventh hour. At last all hope was gone ; the day of his departure was settled, and with the last of his money, carefully saved for the terrible voyage, he set out to pay the passage money. As he walked along, his eyes fixed blindly on

the imaginary, overwhelming future, he heard a voice cry out.

"Why, Chopin! what's the matter? You look as if you were walking to your own funeral!"

Chopin stopped and looked round; it was Prince Valentine Radziwill whom he had met several times in Paris. He bowed and mumbled something about the disagreeable weather.

Prince Valentine looked at him closely and then shook his head.

"Come in here and take *un petit verre* with me, and tell me your troubles. The weather is disgusting, but I don't think that accounts for your expression."

Chopin could not resist the Polish words and the Prince's kind smile and pressure. He sank into a seat outside the café where they had met and said with a sigh:

"Yes, yes, it is the weather—for if it is unpleasant here what will it be like on the Atlantic?"

"On the Atlantic?" Radziwill was startled, and paused to think. "You are going to America? My dear Chopin, I can't believe that you'll prefer America to Paris. . . ."

"No, I suppose not," said poor Chopin gloomily, "but perhaps America will appreciate me better than Paris has. . . ."

"Hm," said Radziwill. "I must say I doubt that too . . . but tell me—you gave a concert the other day—I thought that was a great success? Didn't all the critics praise you? I'm sure I heard nothing but astonishment at my compatriot's genius!"

"Yes," replied Chopin, "everyone was very *polite* . . . the only trouble was I made no money over it—in fact I lost a good deal."

"I see," pondered Radziwill. "And have you no pupils? Would you condescend to take them?"

"I would condescend all right—the lack of condescension seems to be on their part. . . ."

Radziwill looked at the ground and was silent for a little while. At last he looked up.

"Well," he said cheerfully. "Don't give way to despair. You want a little society to enliven you. Do you know Baron James de Rothschild? No? Well, never mind, I know him quite well, and I'm going to an evening party at his house to-morrow night. . . . I want you to come with me . . . yes, yes, it will do you good. . . . I shall come and fetch you at nine o'clock."

When Prince Valentine had gone Chopin rose too, and walked slowly home . . . he determined to postpone the purchase of his ticket till after the party.

On the following evening when he entered Baron Rothschild's drawing-room he was resolved that if it were to be his last party in Paris he would enjoy it. He immediately recognized several aristocratic Poles—Prince and Princess Adam Czartoryski, Count Plater, Countess Potocka, and besides them he saw many of the more fashionable musical stars, amongst whom were Lablache, Malibran-Garcia and Bériot, the violinist. Heine, whom he had met once or twice before, was also there, and hurried up to speak to him.

"Are you playing to-night?" he asked. "I hope you are going to improvise. . . . I love improvisation."

"Oh, no," said Chopin. "I shan't be asked to play, but I do hope to have the pleasure of hearing Malibran. . . ."

At that moment Baron Rothschild advanced and bowed very politely to Chopin.

"I do beg you will forgive me, Monsieur, for my importunity, but I have been commissioned to ask you to play, by a young and beautiful compatriot of yours—Countess Delphine Potocka. She tells me she will never forgive me if I fail to persuade you, so I implore you to be merciful and give us this great pleasure."

Chopin blushed, hesitated, looked round in vain for Prince Valentine, and then with his sweetest smile bowed his consent to the Baron. As he walked across the room towards the piano he felt, in a kind of reminiscence of his childhood, the intoxication of the bright lights, the cheerful voices, sparkling eyes, low necks and elegant dresses. He brushed against a lady's silk flounce, just for the pleasure of the sensation; his breath came quickly and he sat down. The feel of the ivory under his finger-tips was all that was needed that night to complete his inspiration, and he played as he had seldom played before. When he stood up he found the ladies crowding round him, buzzing, he thought, like bees round a flower.

"Ah, how delicious. . . . I never heard anything so sweet . . . it was the delicacy of the touch . . . what ravishing melodies . . . what poetical feeling . . . oh, it is quite, quite unique! . . ."

Each princess, each countess, was determined to pay her own compliment; and when they had exhausted themselves Heine advanced, and taking his hand, gazed at him with a faint smile, and cooed in his gentle, penetrating voice:

"I feel as if you were paying us a visit from the realm of dreams, and can bring us the latest news from that lovely country . . . tell us, are the roses there still in their flame-hued pride? Do the trees still sing as beautifully in the moonlight?"

The ladies murmured their applause, and whispered, enraptured, at the meeting of Music and Poetry; Baron de Rothschild thanked Chopin simply and sincerely for his beautiful playing, and Prince Valentine Radziwill, his face flushed, his eyes flashing, caught him by the arm and exclaimed in an eager undertone:

"I hope you have changed your mind about America."

VII

CHOPIN walked home to the Boulevard Poissonnière scarcely knowing where he was or what he was doing. The intoxication of society, music and flattery was working powerfully in his veins, and it would have been difficult at that moment to set a limit to his ambitions and anticipations. At the bottom, however, he was aware that all this was a bubble, and that he would awake in the morning to an empty larder and a cold sitting-room. He slept soundly till daylight and was immediately conscious of the horrible, inevitable reaction.

He lay in bed awake, but unable to bring himself to get up. Why should he? What was there for him to get up for? At last he began to wonder what there was to stay in bed for; and putting on a dressing-gown he went into his sitting-room. On the table were two letters—bills, of course; but no, the envelopes were too thick and the seals too elegant—surely he knew that crest . . . he tore it open.

“My mother-in-law, Princess Adam . . . piano-forte lessons . . . last night . . . Prince Valentine Radziwill thinks you might be induced . . . arrange terms. . . .”

“Heavens, here is Princess Marcelline Czartoryska wanting me to teach her music! ‘Might be induced,’ indeed! Well, how perfectly splendid! Now what’s in this one? Probably something dreadful.”

Not at all; it was a most flattering request from Countess Plater, another Polish lady, that Chopin would play the following week at a party at which she was expecting the Count d’Appony, the Austrian ambassador. She delicately hinted that she was not asking him to do this for nothing, and mentioned a sum that quite startled Chopin.

He flung down the letters and breathed deeply.

"No need for America," was his first thought, and the sun seemed to shine twice as brightly as before. "That good Prince Valentine," was the second; "this is all his doing. . . . I can never be grateful enough. . . ."

An older, more experienced man would perhaps not have concluded from these two letters that his fortune was made; but in this particular case it happened that the buoyant optimism of youth was justified. In the course of the next few days he was besieged by requests for music lessons and invitations to play in private houses. Amongst the aristocracy of the salons he speedily became famous, and more than famous, fashionable.

The question of bread and butter suddenly vanished from the horizon, and his diet was changed to an apparently unending supply of éclairs and champagne. Yet amidst the whirling gaieties of Parisian society he retained his strong predilection for Polish drawing-rooms, and amongst those he most frequented was that of Countess Plater.

The *Pani Kasztelanowa*, or Lady of the Castle, as the Polish youths called her, was a splendid example of what a patroness of the arts could be. She collected around her a group of brilliant young musicians to whom she acted in turn the parts of Egeria, fairy godmother, nurse and guardian angel. Her interest in music was sincere and informed, and though she often lamented that she had not herself had the training of her daughter Pauline, who soon became a pupil of Chopin's, her own mastery of the piano was by no means to be despised. Chopin became an intimate of the house, the more readily, perhaps, that Hiller and Liszt went there nearly as often as he did.

"You are always talking of Polish music, Chopin," said Hiller one evening in her drawing-room. "But really, I'm not at all sure that nationality in music is

important—I can understand the difference between *good* music and *bad* music—but between Polish and German. . . . I doubt whether it exists.”

“But surely,” cried Mme Plater, “the idiom is quite different—you get the characteristic Slavonic rhythms—their peculiar melodic progressions—I don’t see how you can deny there is such a thing as Polish music.”

“Of course he can’t,” interposed Liszt quickly before Hiller or Chopin could speak, “the differences are very salient, but I think it might be argued that they are superficial.”

“Superficial!” Chopin’s eyes widened; he shook his head and smiled. “Oh no; they are profound—*very* profound. . . .”

“Superficial in this sense,” said Hiller, “that a competent musician can perform and appreciate equally well a piece of music of any nationality.”

“That is just what I deny!” cried Chopin eagerly. “Do you tell me anyone who is not a Pole—has not been brought up as a child in Poland—can play the Mazurka ‘Poland is not yet lost,’ as it ought to be played?—Absurd!”

“Well, that is easily proved,” exclaimed Mme Plater. “Here are you three musicians, a German, a Hungarian and a Pole; each one of you shall play the Mazurka and we shall see which interprets it best!”

“Agreed!” cried Liszt and Chopin; Hiller smiled and said with a deprecating air:

“I am afraid I shall not do my fatherland justice.”

He sat down however without more ado and played the Mazurka clearly and sweetly; then rose and Liszt took his place.

Liszt though not yet the giant at the piano that he afterwards became, was even now an unrivalled master. Without any apparent effort he brought from the piano trumpet tones of defiant pride or wails of despair; the room rang with fiery anger and hopeless agony,

and when he had finished there were two red spots on Mme Plater's cheeks, and her eyes were flashing.

"Oh Chopin," she cried, holding out her hands towards him; and Chopin stood up. He looked at her and smiled somewhat sadly; then without word sat down at the piano.

"Poland is not yet lost. . . ." Unhappy Poland. . . . Poland of my youth—of my childhood—of my earliest hopes—my sweetest desires—mysterious, poetic Poland, melancholy, dreaming, enchanted. . . .

His delicate touch, fragile yet sweet, and of an unsurpassed purity and smoothness, almost startled the listeners, after Liszt's fire and thunder . . . and then one suddenly realized this was a dance—a mazurka—a dance that swayed to and fro, that hastened, that slackened, yet always, in some mysterious way retained its rhythm, and that breathed forth a delicious sadness, more exquisite than joy. . . . "Poland is not yet lost. . . ."

When he had finished his three auditors had tears on their cheeks and Chopin himself alone smiled with the remoteness of some emotion deeper than tears.

"Well, Chopin, there is no doubt you are right," said Liszt at last, and Hiller nodded his head. "That was the soul of Poland." Then turning to Mme Plater he took her hand and kissed it. "And his reward is a smile from the angel of Poland."

Mme Plater laughed.

"Ah, *mon petit Chopin*," she said, holding Liszt's hand in one of hers and putting the other on Chopin's shoulder, "*Si j'étais jeune et jolie, je te prendrais pour mari, Hiller pour ami, et Liszt pour amant.*"

VIII

WHAT a delightful thing it is to have money to spend ! Chopin now for the first time found himself in a position to provide himself with the luxuries his nature demanded, and he flung himself with ardour into the joys of arranging his life as he wished.

His first step was to leave the Boulevard Poissonière and take a set of rooms in the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin. Here he had, instead of two little rooms just big enough for a bed and a piano, a drawing-room, dining-room, study and bedroom, ample and airy, where he could work without feeling cramped, and receive his aristocratic pupils without shame. The decorating and furnishing of these rooms was a source of great interest and pleasure to him ; the first piece of furniture he bought was a little *causeuse*, and the next a pastel drawing of the pyramids by Jules Coignet. This picture he hung over his piano, and, to the secret amusement of some of his friends, always kept in this place whatever his change of lodgings.

He was now able to indulge himself in the kind of clothes he wanted—simple, rich and made by the best tailor he could find. This was a matter of considerable importance to him—his clothes meant almost as much to him as to a fashionable young lady—and he was as particular about the smallest details as about the general effect. Elegant shoes, black buttons, a black velvet waistcoat with very little pattern—or, if this was unprocurable, one of fine silk cut not too open—no little thought and time were devoted to making himself look what he called “ respectable ” and his friends “ exquisite.”

One other pleasure his improved circumstances permitted him. He was able to give money to his

needy fellow-countrymen, of whom there seemed a plentiful supply in Paris, and it was seldom indeed that he refused help when he was asked for it. All this spending, however, inevitably meant but little saving, and though his father was constantly assuring him that he ought not to feel secure until he had 2,000 francs put by, he always found his money gone almost as soon as it was earned.

Busy as he was kept by music lessons, of which he sometimes gave as many as five a day, he still found time to do plenty of composing, and his growing celebrity made it increasingly easy to obtain the publication of what he wrote. Thus his work became better known even in countries where he himself did not perform it, and especially in Germany aroused the usual fury of those who hated innovation even accompanied by talent, and the enthusiasm of those who loved it especially when introduced by genius. Amongst the latter was Robert Schumann, who, as early as 1831, when Chopin's *La Ci Darem* Variations had fallen into his hands, had recognized and hailed him as a genius, and who greeted all his succeeding work with discriminating and fervent admiration. Rellstab, a critic of the old school, wrote venomous abuse whenever he had the chance, and even went so far as to insert in his review *Iris* an incredibly grotesque letter, full of grammatical mistakes, misspellings and vulgar idioms, purporting to come from Chopin in protest at these hostile articles. Chopin himself was very indifferent to both abuse and praise, when written and printed. He was painfully sensitive to the applause or lack of applause from an audience, but more remote criticism hardly touched him, and the indignation of his family over Rellstab's impertinences only amused him. Infinitely more exciting was the news that Louise—his darling sister Louise!—was to be married to Kalasanty Jedrzejewicz, an old friend of the family. He was delighted ; wrote an eagerly affectionate

letter of congratulation to his future brother-in-law, and only regretted that he could not go to Warsaw to be his best man.

IX

IN the course of the next year two of Chopin's greatest Polish friends came and settled in Paris. One was Julian Fontana, the musician, who had been teaching the piano in London since his flight from Poland; the other was Jan Matuszynski, who after spending some time at Tübingen, had been given an appointment as professor in the Ecole de Médecine of Paris. Matuszynski at first shared Chopin's rooms in the Rue Chaussée d'Antin, and the presence of this friend of his childhood was a very great happiness to Chopin. Jan's society, too, made him perhaps less dependent on that of Liszt, for which he was secretly beginning to feel a certain repugnance. Liszt's exuberance, exaggerations, complicated love affairs constantly involving him in situations from which only a series of Gargantuan lies could extricate him, even his extreme romanticism in art began to irritate Chopin, though he still felt bound to him by many ties of association.

Probably part of the annoyance he felt at Liszt's romanticism was due to the fact that in the early years of their friendship he himself was infected by it. When Berlioz returned from Rome and gave his first concert in Paris, producing among other works his *Episode de la vie d'un artiste*, Chopin, sitting between the enthusiastic Liszt and Hiller, applauded with them this vehement demonstration against the forts of classicism. But the position was a false one. The taste which found Beethoven too coarse was not likely to be able to swallow Berlioz, and one day after sitting

through one of these revolutionary symphonies he told Franchomme that such music justified any man in breaking off friendship with the author of it. Only a *boutade*, of course; and yet perhaps not only that. And it is not improbable that the recollection of his earlier misplaced admiration made him doubly bitter now.

One morning at the end of a lesson to a young German pupil called Gutmann, he gave vent to his feelings.

"Because a thing is *new* it does not follow it is good; because a thing is *old* it does not follow it is good. Many of the rules and methods of past composers are now done for; we must beat out new paths for ourselves. But where will you find amongst the new writers one who can be named in the same day with Mozart?"

Gutman, only fifteen years old, and perhaps foolishly led away, in spite of his master's words, by novelty for its own sake, rather rashly murmured "Berlioz?"

"Berlioz!" Chopin snorted. Then seizing a piece of manuscript paper and a pen he dipped the pen in the ink, pressed it violently on the paper, then lifted it off with a jerk, spluttering blots right and left.

"That is the way Berlioz composes!" he said. "Turn all those blots into notes, trust to God, and you have written a symphony!"

Liszt meanwhile was plunging deeper and deeper into the Romantic vortex, and frequented writers almost as much as musicians. After hearing Victor Hugo read aloud "*Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne*," he implored Chopin to recognize its greatness and himself felt inspired with a *Berg Symphonie*. Chopin, however, thought that much of Victor Hugo's writing was in bad taste; nor would he go with Liszt to be presented by Alfred de Musset to George Sand, the rising authoress of *Indiana* and *Lelia*, declaring that he could not endure lady novelists.

Ladies of fashion were another matter. They

charmed him—fascinated him—bewitched him. Before a graceful movement, a beautiful brow, a winning smile, he was helpless; a turn of the wrist enslaved him, a musical laugh brought him to his knees. He might have found himself, like Liszt, in many a quandary, but for two things: first, the very catholicity of his admirations, the facility with which he could change his *inamorata* six times in an evening; secondly, the severity of his judgment. If a glance could conquer, a glance could disenchant him. An awkwardness, a solecism, were fatal to their perpetrator. Above all he demanded—what he never gave—an absolutely exclusive devotion from the object he favoured.

“What has happened to Adèle?” asked Matuszynski one day. “Why do we hear no more of her? Has she been disgraced?”

“What! Didn’t you know?” exclaimed Liszt, with a cascade of laughter. Haven’t you heard the terrible fate of the fair Adèle? I’ll tell you about it. Adèle, as you know, was in great favour; in fact, it is believed the Sultan was actually going to throw the handkerchief. He had positively invited me to attend on him while he paid a state visit, probably preparatory to making a demand in form for her hand. By ill chance, when the unfortunate lady caught sight of your humble servant she so far forgot herself as to offer me a chair while allowing the renowned *maestro* to stand! Need I say more? We shall certainly never hear the faithless wretch’s name again!”

Liszt himself was going through a more serious affair of the heart. The beautiful Countess d’Agoult, of whom he had said when he first met her “*sie hat Geist und Feuer, aber nicht Wahrhaftigkeit*,” had triumphed over this disability—if it was one—and inspired Liszt with an overmastering passion. After flying to Lamennais, in Brittany, for ghostly strength and counsel, he had finally yielded to the yearnings of

the flesh, returned to Paris, and provided his adored one with a little room in the suburbs for which she abandoned her husband. Chopin never felt really at home with the Countess, in spite of her beauty and good manners, and the connection was another barrier between him and Liszt.

Was there, too, a little jealousy of Liszt or, at any rate, envy of his success as a pianist? Successful as Chopin always was in a drawing-room of select listeners the same success did not invariably meet him in a concert-room. Perhaps the very acuteness of his sensibilities made it more difficult for him to be certain of himself, for a very little want of recognition at the beginning of a concert was apt to unhinge him till the end. He suffered agonies for a fortnight before a public performance, practising Bach and groaning, leaving severely untouched any of his own compositions that he intended to play, fussing about the fit of his clothes, and growing daily more and more irritable. When, as occurred at two of the concerts he gave that season, his reception was a chilly and silent one, only punctuated by applause from a few of his personal friends, the depression that followed was terrible to watch. In the end he gave up the struggle, and for three years did not appear on a concert platform.

"It is no good," he said despairingly to Liszt, "a crowd terrifies me, their breath suffocates me, their staring eyes paralyse me. I am not made for the public; you are. If you don't win them you overwhelm them."

Liszt's career as the greatest of pianists was indeed well begun.

X

SOON after Chopin's return to Paris, Antoine and Casimir Wodzinski called on Chopin and told him they were going to Geneva, where the Countess, Marie and Felix were settled, and asked if he had any messages for them. Chopin sent his compliments to the Countess, who had always been one of his most affectionate patronesses, and asked Antoine if Marie still went on with her music.

"I believe so," replied Antoine; "I'm sure she will be pleased to hear that her old master still takes an interest in her progress."

Chopin smiled, and his thoughts returned, a little sentimentally, to the old days in the drawing-room at home, or under the great cedar tree at Sluzewo; he pictured to himself Marie's little white face under her cascade of black hair, her small fingers, stepping over the keys of the piano, or wielding a paint-brush with charming skill.

A few weeks later a package arrived for him from Geneva. It contained a manuscript of Marie's and a letter from Felix reminding him of his visits as a child to Sluzewo, their country seat, and inviting him, in his mother's name, to spend the summer with them in Switzerland.

"Well," thought Chopin to himself, "how delightful it would be; it would be almost like taking a summer holiday in Poland—Sluzewo itself—but alas, it's quite out of the question. No; I'm afraid I'm not yet sufficiently '*arrivé*' to be able to manage it. . . ." With a pleasant feeling of melancholy he picked up Marie's manuscript and ran his eye over it.

"An Air and Variations . . . not bad at all, for a young lady . . . really the theme is quite pretty. . . .

I will improvise on it to-night at the Leo's. . . . Dear little Marie . . . I suppose by now she is quite grown up. . . ."

When he wrote to Felix refusing the Countess's invitation he sent his thanks to his "*estimable collègue Mlle Marie*," and enclosed for her a newly published Waltz. Antoine and Casimir remained in Geneva, and except for a short but very friendly note from the Countess herself he heard no more of the Wodzinskis for some time.

XI

FOR some time Nicolas Chopin had not been very well. He wrote to Frederic to tell him that he and Justine were going to spend the summer at Carlsbad that he might take the waters; Isabella, it must be mentioned, would not be left deserted by this arrangement, for she had recently married Barcinski, her old flame, now the Director of Steam Navigation on the Vistula. Directly Frederic got this letter from his father he determined to join his parents at Carlsbad. Both for fear of being disappointed at the last moment, and in order to give them a pleasant surprise, he said nothing to them of his intentions, but set off by coach, and travelling day and night, reached Carlsbad in a few days.

"And now what am I to do?" he thought suddenly, as he stood outside the post-house. "Here is a nice state of affairs—why, I don't even know where to look for them! Well, I suppose the first thing is to get a room at an inn."

Luck guided his steps, for the first person he met in the passage of the inn he had chosen was an old Warsaw friend, M. Zawadski.

"Hullo! Is this Frederic Chopin? How unexpected! Pray what are you doing here?" exclaimed Zawadski.

Chopin explained that he had come to meet his parents but did not even know where to look for them, whereat Zawadski laughed uproariously.

"Come along and have breakfast," he said, "and while we're eating we'll look at the Visitors' List; very likely that will tell us."

But no; there was no sign of the Chopins' name there. Frederic began to look gloomy.

"Come, come, don't be so easily downhearted," exclaimed Zawadski giving his young friend an encouraging thump on the back. "I know most of the places where Poles put up. We'll just run round and see if we can't get on their track."

Alas, they met with no success. All day they spent in going from inn to inn, but everywhere to meet with the same "No; Herr Chopin is not here." Frederic, wearied by his hasty journey and the day's disappointments, began to look white and drooping, and after an early dinner he suddenly got up and asked Zawadski to excuse him—he was very sleepy and would go to bed.

He was awoken next morning by a voice that seemed strangely familiar. He opened his eyes, stared, then bounded out of bed, and with a shriek of "Papa! Papa!" flung himself into his father's arms.

After the first embraces and exclamations Frederic wanted to know how his father had unearthed him. "For," he declared, "Zawadski and I spent all yesterday looking for you and could find no trace of you."

"I know," said his father. "Well, it seems that after you had gone to bed last night Zawadski met a friend of Danielski's, who told him that the Danielskis had gone on to Toeplitz, and mentioned that we had taken their rooms. That good Zawadski came round

to us at cock-crow this morning, for he declared he could not bear you to go on looking as you did yesterday for another five minutes. And now, Frederic, be quick and dress and come along to see your mother."

What a delightful meeting it was! How all three embraced and laughed and chattered! How Frederic kissed his mother's hand, gave her his arm in the streets, laughed at his father's jokes, and made jokes of his own! What quantities of things there were to communicate on both sides which could never be told in letters! Frederic wanted to know if Isabella and Barcinski teased each other as much now as before they were married. Nicolas gave an imitation of Louise's baby in a temper, and when Frederic said laughingly that he wanted to hear his father's latest accomplishment of playing on the violin both his parents begged him to let them hear some of his music.

"Play your Scherzo, darling," said his mother. "Louise tries to play it, but I think it's a little difficult for her. . . . I don't think I have much idea of what it's really like."

And though Frederic declared, after he had played it, that they still had no idea of what it was like from hearing it on the miserable old piano which was all he could find, Justine understood quite enough to be almost alarmed at her son's genius. She saw him again as a child, his little legs swinging loose from the piano stool, his silky hair falling over the famous lace collar . . . and now he was a master of his art, drawing from the piano such a tumult of exhausting frenzy, such a delicate dream of beauty. . . .

They spent long, happy days together, Frederic also falling back into reminiscences of his joyous childhood. One of his greatest pleasures was to watch the exquisite relations of his parents to each other. His thoughts kept circling round that happy home in Warsaw where affection, intimacy and confidence made the foundations of a perfect family life, where the

very clouds were beautiful white shapes on the deep blue sky, and their one great sorrow was made bearable by the increasing depth of love between those who remained. . . .

The time passed all too quickly. Nicolas was beginning to talk of the necessity for returning to Warsaw. One day Chopin received a letter from Antoine Wodzinski telling him that they were all leaving Geneva ; he was going to Paris, the Countess, his brothers and sister were on their way to Dresden. Why did not Chopin join them there ?

For some reason—Frederic certainly could not have said what—his heart bounded at the thought. It seemed as if a stay in Dresden with the Wodzinskis would console him for the inevitable parting from his parents. He was so eager in urging this change of plan that Nicolas and Justine consented, and the little detour was arranged, by which they all three went together to Tetschen, Frederic continuing his journey to Dresden, his parents returning to Warsaw by way of Breslau.

“ Good-bye, my darling,” cried Justine, putting her head out of the coach window. “ Write often, and let us know how you are getting on . . . keep warm in the winter and don’t catch colds. . . .”

“ Good-bye, Frederic,” cried Nicolas, kissing him on both cheeks before getting in. “ Don’t go to too many evening parties, and *do* try to save a little money. . . .”

XII

FROM Tetschen to Dresden Frederic was plunged in melancholy. It was terrible to have to part from his father and mother like this, with so little security of ever seeing them again . . . his father was decidedly ill—a heart complaint was a very serious thing—his mother looked old and worn—heaven knew what troubles she had had to endure, and how much they had exhausted her . . . thus he went on, more and more doleful, ending in a regular attack of homesickness. Ah, why must he be for ever wandering over the face of the earth? Why could he not have a home of his own—some quiet little house in Poland, not too far from Warsaw, where he could compose at his leisure without interruption from grand ladies, his shirts mended and his dinner cooked by a beautiful and adoring Polish maiden!

He arrived at Dresden at about five o'clock, and having dined, finding himself with nothing to do, decided that he might as well pay his respects to the Countess immediately. She was staying with her brother-in-law, the Palatine Wodzinski, who, exiled from Warsaw, had settled in Dresden, and occupied his declining years in collecting engravings, books, and medals. Chopin had often heard of him and his absent-minded ways from Antoine, and soon found out from the innkeeper where his palace was situated.

Accustomed as he was to aristocratic society, Chopin, even now, not infrequently suffered from shyness when he stood on a new doorstep, or in a new ante-room, awaiting admission. Such an attack seized him at this moment; he felt alternately hot and cold, and tried to make up in advance suitable compliments and politenesses. Before he could gather

himself together the door of the drawing-room was opened, and he was obliged to enter and bow, almost shutting his eyes to make the effort, to his hostess.

"Dear Frederic!" the voice suddenly seemed surprisingly well-known to him; he looked up—the Countess's face, form, dress even, were so familiar that he had the impression of continuing a relationship which had hardly been interrupted. Casimir and Felix standing at the back of the room gave him friendly nods; the little old gentleman with the white wig sitting in the light of a big lamp to whom he was brought to make his bow was evidently the Palatine; but—now he was puzzled. Here was a little girl, with black hair and black eyes, reminding him of his old friend Marie. But surely Marie could not still be like this. And who was the tall, graceful young lady smiling and curtsying to him with such a deliciously bashful yet happy air? Surely this could not be Marie? He bowed—hesitated—looked at the young lady—at the little girl—at the Countess, who at last came to his rescue.

"You know us all except Thérèse, you have not seen her before, have you? We all think she is just like what Marie was at her age. What do you think?"

"Indeed, I think so, too. Shall I confess, I thought it *was* Marie, and was just going to ask her if she has been practising regularly!"

This mild joke made them all laugh, and after that Frederic himself felt at ease; indeed, it would have been impossible for him not to, so unaffectedly did the whole family resume the terms and friendship of former years. In a day or two Monsieur and Mademoiselle were forgotten; Chopin was Frederic to them all, and the girls were to him Marie and Thérèse. Count Wodzinski stared at this a little, Palatine Wodzinski, who was particular as to formalities and social distinctions, even more; but the Countess laughed, and said they had all been chil-

dren together—they were almost like brother and sister.

What a month they spent ! Frederic resumed his music lessons, in spite of Marie's disingenuous protests ; they sang together, they walked together in the Grosse-garten, they watched the Elbe from the terraces. The old intimacy reawoke, yet sometimes Frederic felt there were reserves there had not been before. Sometimes she seemed to escape him, to veil her thoughts, her feelings, with a new, a troubling modesty. There was a change ; but he did not wish it away. He did not analyse the cause, or set himself to conquer her timidity. He only felt that every word, every silence of hers was what it ought to be ; he had no desire to alter by a hair's-breadth the perfection of beauty and goodness she presented.

Nearly every evening they met in the Palatine's drawing-room. They always had some music, and often, afterwards, Marie and Frederic would sit together, far from the light of the big lamp, and discuss at length some musical or literary subject. One morning Marie was having a lesson, when Casimir, always a tease, rushed into the room and cried in a stage whisper :

" Take care ! My uncle is coming ! "

Marie turned crimson and took her hands off the keys. Frederic, startled and perplexed, stared at Casimir and asked him what on earth he meant.

" Haven't you noticed my uncle coughing when you talk to Marie in the evening ? " said Casimir maliciously. " Well, it seems he thinks your birth is not high enough to discuss art with a Countess *every* evening and he has protested to Mamma. "

Chopin felt his own cheeks getting hot, but he commanded himself, and said calmly :

" And what did your mother say ? "

" Mamma ? Oh, she just laughed at him and said you were an old friend and that Marie adored music.

The fact is that Mamma adores you herself, Fred, and it will take more than my uncle to put her against you."

"Then," said Chopin, very gravely and calmly, turning to the still blushing Marie, "if your mother sees no harm in it there can be no objection to our continuing our lesson, *Countess*."

Casimir laughed, and Marie quickly recovered herself; but Chopin began to realize what was happening to him. He was, however, too happy as things were for him to face the reality which, whatever came of it, would necessarily lead to such vital changes. . . . At present he was content to shut his eyes and float, hardly even dreaming, with the delightful stream. . . .

Too soon, in any case, changes were to be brought about by the nature of things. The Wodzinskis were returning to Poland, Chopin must go back to Paris, the sad parting must be made, and must be made soon. The Countess was the first to think of the only real consolation—they would all meet again in the following summer. Marie was inclined at first to think a whole year was a long time off, but Frederic persuaded her the time would pass quickly away. He would be busy composing new works for her to criticize; she would be busy practising, improving, above all, her legato touch; he would think of her at Sluzewo in the park, by the lake, under the cedar tree. He turned away. It was Marie's turn to tell him that a year was but twelve short months.

The last night came. Frederic was to leave by the night coach, and before starting went to the Wodzinski Palace to make his last farewell.

"Oh dear, how comfortable you all do look!" he cried as he came in. "I must try to impress the picture on my mind to console me on my uncomfortable journey. Every time the coach bumps me awake during the night I shall think of the Countess with her em-

broidery, the Palatine with his engravings, Marie at the piano—and, oh, what a delicious scent. . . .”

“It comes from these roses; aren’t they lovely?” said Marie, pointing to a bowl on a small table near the piano. “Would you like one to take with you on your journey?”

Frederic went up to where she was standing and looked into her eyes.

“Oh, yes,” he said; and his lips trembled. He could say no more.

She picked a deep red rose from the bowl and held it to him. He took it, and for a moment they stood almost—not quite—touching. Then Marie dropped her hand. At that moment the big clock of the Frauenkirche struck ten, and while the deep notes boomed out they stood silent and motionless. When the last stroke died away Frederic went to the piano and began to improvise—a waltz, where love, the tolling of a bell and the hurrying of passers-by can be heard. It was short; and when he had finished only one more word remained to be said:

“Adieu!”

XIII

CHOPIN broke his journey by a stay in Leipzig, where he spent a few days. Mendelssohn was there, his *St. Paul* nearly finished, and the two composers spent the morning in playing to each other their own compositions. Mendelssohn took him to make the acquaintance of Schumann and the Wiecks; Clara played him a new and unpublished Sonata in F sharp minor by Schumann, which Chopin praised but did not like, and two *études* of his own. The last of these, the one in G minor, he had been teaching Marie; while Clara played, with her clear, resonant touch, and masterly grasp of the music, Chopin saw a pair of delicate white hands stumbling over the keys, heard the wavering, hesitating tones he had loved to listen to . . . he looked away. But Schumann, eagerly noting the impression Clara was making, told her afterwards, in triumph, "You brought tears to his eyes . . .!"

Paris, that autumn, seemed a new town to him—gentler, less aggressive, more on its good behaviour. Chopin himself was full of good resolutions. He determined not to go out so much at night, but to work harder at his manuscripts—to save money—ah! how important that was! One could never settle down in life—marry and found a family, for instance, unless one had learnt to save. Besides, he must have enough money to go to Germany again next year. He must persuade his parents to meet him again, and again he would go on to Dresden to be with the Wodzinskis. . . . Yes, the summer had been a perfect success, he must certainly repeat it next year, as nearly as possible.

His first most pressing duty was to write out Marie's waltz. What delightful hours he spent over it ; altering the ornamentation, rewriting a bar or two, and finally copying it out with every possible care, and, after long and anxious thought, inscribing it "*pour Mlle Marie,*" and at the end placing his signature and "*Drezno, Sept. 1835.*" Then to calculate how long it would take to reach her—to wonder if she would write to thank him for it—to count, again and again, the shortest number of days in which he could possibly hear from her, to estimate the probable number, and to reckon how long it would be before he need give up all hope. One morning, two days after he had sent off the parcel, long before there could be a reply, he saw a letter on his breakfast table. He knew the handwriting too well to doubt. The blood rushed to his head. How could he have dreamed of anything so delightful ? She had actually written before hearing from him. He opened the letter carefully. It was long—and, oh, surely, surely it was not his imagination ! She was sorry he had gone—she thought of him with affection—she liked his music—she talked of him to her mother, her brothers and sister. The whole letter was a priceless treasure. Long as it was, he read it over and over again, till he almost knew it by heart ; he carried it about with him everywhere till at last the paper began to crack along the folds. Then he put it tenderly away and only took it out to gaze at it two or three times a day.

It is to be feared, however, that some of Frederic's good resolutions were not put into execution. He certainly did not give up evening parties. He was greatly in request, and so happy that he was out almost every night, often not coming home till two o'clock. As he was very busy teaching during the day, he probably overdid things. One wet night, going out, against Jan's advice, with very thin shoes, he caught a violent cold which developed into bronchitis. This

put a temporary stop to his activities. He abandoned himself—perhaps a little crossly—to the nursing of Jan and Fontana, and read a lot of poetry by Mickiewicz. One evening he suddenly asked Jan to give him a pencil and some music paper.

“I’ve got a most gorgeous idea,” he said. “It’s going to be something quite new—a new kind of music altogether—a Ballade.”

Jan looked at him carefully, and then gave him what he wanted.

“You can get up to-morrow,” he said, “you’re convalescent.”

The Ballade in G minor was, however, not a work of illness, or even of convalescence. Chopin took a long time over it, and flung into it pathos, beauty and a torrent of passion. When it was finished it seemed to him the truest expression of himself that he had yet achieved. “Will Marie like it?” he thought; and knew that on the answer to that question hung a whole world.

XIV

IN the spring Chopin received a letter from Mendelssohn begging him to go to the Lower Rhenish Music Festival, to be held this year at Düsseldorf. As well as Mendelssohn's *St. Paul* there was to be performed a hitherto unknown Overture by Beethoven—his third overture to *Fidelio*, afterwards known as the *Leonora No. 3*. Schumann joined in a most affectionate way in pressing Chopin to come; but he was not really tempted. He had heard as much of *St. Paul* as he wanted to, and though *Fidelio* was one of the few things of Beethoven he admired wholeheartedly he did not feel particularly drawn to go and hear a new overture to it. The real point, however, was that he had not enough money to take two holidays in the year. Everything he could save was to be devoted to taking him to Germany in the summer, to stay with the Wodzinskis.

At last the summer came and at Marienbad on a splendid July morning, Marie and Frederic met. Again for a few moments they were held back by shyness; again the shyness melted into the delightful friendliness that Frederic felt nowhere but here. Nothing like this intimacy had ever been. With his sisters, much as he loved them, he had a feeling of commonplace, every-day life—he had the illusion of knowing all that was to be known. With Marie, how different! What depths of wonderful, mysterious thought and emotions there were for him to plumb! And how he became aware, after every conversation in which each sought in vain to reveal everything to the other, that she still kept hidden under the most alluring of veils the richest jewel of her personality; yet with their constant walks, picnics, music lessons, discussions, they grew

nearer and nearer every day, and Frederic knew that the fruit was almost ripe for gathering.

As for the Countess, she seemed nearly as much attached to Frederic as Marie was. She called him her fourth son, adored his music, fussed over his health, and never allowed him to speak to anyone outside the family, for whenever Marie was not with him she was. Frederic felt that all this was of good augur for the success of his suit. Mme Wodzinska was clearly throwing him and Marie together; and though he would have been the first to agree that the exquisite Marie was far above him he could not help hoping that his great love would be allowed to make up for his other deficiencies.

It could not be wondered at if he had outbursts of high spirits. He would make them all rock with laughter at his imitations of celebrated pianists. First the old school—Pixis, Kalkbrenner, prim and pedantic; then Thalberg, with the most wonderful distinction and decorum; then Liszt and the romantic school, with dishevelled hair, and tremendous gestures of arms and hands, throwing them in the air in the style he called "*aller à la chasse aux pigeons*." These entertainments provided pleasing interludes to the sentimental business of love-making, and made the Countess declare that he was really *too, too* versatile!

One day a gentleman sent up to Chopin his card, engraved *Frau und Herr Dirichlet* and with a few words pencilled on it out of which he could only decipher the words *Paul and Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy*. As he stood looking at it the Countess came in and he turned to her.

"Do you know anything of these—what is it—*Dirichlets*? Have they anything to do with Mendelssohn?" and he showed her the card.

She looked at it contemptuously.

"Heavens! What a scrawl! I can't make out a word of it . . . no, I know nothing of them. I expect

it's some remote cousin of poor Mendelssohn's, seizing the opportunity to try and make you perform. Now, please, Frederic, do remember you are here for a holiday, and don't give in to these troublesome requests . . . if it once gets out that you play for anyone who asks you there will be no end to these pests and you will never have a moment to yourself."

Frederic smiled and set off to interview Herr Dirichlet. He turned out to be a handsome, well-dressed young man, who, after apologizing very politely for troubling Chopin, explained that he was staying a few days in Marienbad with his wife Rebecca, the sister of Paul and Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy.

Chopin bowed and remarked, a little coldly, that he was pleased to meet M. Dirichlet.

"My wife has heard so much of your playing from her brothers," continued Dirichlet, with growing discomfort at Chopin's chilly manner. "Would it be at all possible for her to have the inestimable pleasure of hearing you while you are in Marienbad?"

"I am really afraid," Chopin began, hesitatingly. . . . "My health—my nerves—I am just resting while I am here. . . ."

"Of course," said Dirichlet hastily, "not anything on a grand scale . . . only a mazurka . . ."

At that moment Chopin saw through the window that Marie had gone out into the garden and was making for the big lime tree under whose shade they loved to talk. . . . Poor Dirichlet's fate was sealed.

"Impossible, sir," he said with decision, "the fact is the pianos here are quite too bad to play on . . . And how is your dear sister, Mme Hensel? . . . Paul, I hear, is married . . . must you go? A thousand regrets. . . . Good morning. . . ."

Two minutes later he had settled down under the lime tree.

XV

"FREDERIC," said Marie one morning, "I should like to try to do a portrait of you. Would you mind very much sitting for it? It will be so delightful to have it to look at when you have left us. . . ."

Frederic blushed, and, of course, said he would be delighted. Where should he sit? What would be the best light? After a serious discussion it was agreed that their old haunt under the lime tree would be the most suitable spot. Here, then, they sat for most of the days that remained—unfortunately vanishing so quickly—and while Marie drew Frederic told her about his life in Vienna, his early struggles in Paris, and then about his success there—a thrilling history, alike gratifying to him to tell and absorbing to her to listen to. All the time that he was speaking Frederic had the sensation that this was only a prelude, leading up to the great theme; and he promised himself that when the portrait was finished he would declare himself. When one afternoon she put down her brush and said it was done, he was surprised at its being ready so soon. He had not expected it, and was not prepared. He could not speak in a hurry; it must be delayed till the next day. The next day, the Countess, secretly suffering from a violent toothache, made some excuse for keeping in her own room, and Frederic knew that he had the whole day before him. During that day, however, he swore it should be done, for two days later the party was to break up, the Wodzinskis returning to Poland and Chopin to France.

How swiftly the hours of that pleasant September day hurried past! Frederic was agitated; Marie gradually caught the infection of his agitation, and

watched his feverish movements in a nervous silence. At last, as the sinking sun left the little garden veiled in twilight, she came towards him with a small album in her hand.

"We are parting now so soon ; before you go I want you to write something in this little book for me. Will you be so kind ? Last year—do you remember ?—you gave me the *Valse de l'Adieu*."

He took the album and the hand that held it. He knew by the feel of it that she was leaving it in his by an effort of the will. He spoke quickly, but, to his surprise, calmly.

"Dearest Marie, do you think I can ever forget what happens when I am with you ? Do you not know that I love you, as truly, as fondly as I can love ? Dearest Marie, can you learn to love me a little ? You have been so kind to me, my angel, that I venture to hope. Will you love me ? Will you marry me ?"

Marie gently extricated her hand from her lover's grasp ; her eyes drooped and she trembled. At last she spoke in a very low voice.

"My dear Frederic, I am very fond of you. . . . I think I love you . . . but I don't know what my parents will say . . . I must be guided by them. . . ."

"Dearest, of course. But surely your mother will have no objection ?"

"I think not . . . but papa. . . ."

Her voice was full of pain ; she looked up at Frederic and he saw that there were tears in her eyes. He caught hold of her hand again.

"Dearest, don't cry ; just tell me this—if your parents do not object, will you . . . can you . . . ?" He could not finish. A delicate pink came into her cheeks ; she smiled faintly, and whispered, almost inaudibly :

"Yes . . . I do . . . dearest Frederic. . . ."

Silence ; while they looked at each other and were happy.

Frederic was the first to return, at least partially, to earth.

"Darling," he said, "I think we had better go and tell your mother—see, it is quite dark. . . . What a short twilight it has been. . . ."

"Yes, let us go to Mamma," she answered, a little nervously, "but the twilight has not quite gone yet . . . I can still see. . . ."

"Oh, no," he said with a laugh, "I don't think you can; you will trip and fall—you must take my arm and I will guide you." But before slipping her little hand into his arm he raised it, and pressed his ardent lips upon her fingers.

When they entered the Countess's room together it was obvious what had happened. Marie's passionate embrace, Frederic's stammered explanation were alike unnecessary. Mme Wodzinska, in the presence of this pair of innocents, could not help a gust of delight. She caressed Marie, and kissed Frederic, and shed a few sentimental tears. . . . But then—what was it? The toothache? The fear of her husband? Or natural worldly wisdom? Then came what seemed to the anxious lovers a sad reaction.

"Dear Frederic, of course it is delightful. You know how much I love you, and how natural it seems that you and Marie should love each other. Still, I am afraid there are difficulties . . . there is the question of money—you cannot live on love, you know . . . and then, I don't know what the Count will say . . . and then" (with a sudden inspiration)—"then there's your health—we could not let our darling Marie marry anyone who was not in good health; you would not wish it yourself, dear Frederic. However, don't look so miserable, my pets; I am sure you will persuade *me* to give my consent. I could not refuse Frederic anything, and I will do my best to get the Count to see it in a good light. Leave it to me, darlings, leave it to me. . . ."

"Ought I not to speak to the Count?" said Frederic, rather tremblingly, and hoping violently the Countess would think not.

"No, no," she said decidedly, and Frederic breathed again. "Leave it to me, I know how to manage him. Dear Frederic, I must send you away now, for really I am not feeling at all well. . . ."

XVI

HE travelled back to Paris, his mind like one in a delirium. His body performed the mechanical actions of entering and leaving the stage-coach; he even stopped a day at Leipzig and visited Schumann and played to him. But he was hardly aware of what he was doing or even of what he was thinking. His thoughts rushed to and fro so wildly that they seemed unconnected and irrational; his emotions swayed from bliss to agony. The only thing that gave him any repose was the picture that from time to time suddenly started into his imagination, of Marie's face—calm, gentle, faintly smiling, faintly flushed. In the contemplation of this beloved tranquillity he found peace, and occasionally slept for a few hours. When he reached Paris the sight of Jan, of his own rooms, his piano, all his music and furniture, restored him to a saner state of mind. He found, too, a letter from the Countess, which she had evidently written immediately after he had left. It was very maternal, assured him she retracted nothing she had promised, but begged him to say nothing about the engagement to anyone. She told him she was sorry that she had been unable to discuss the matter with him more fully at the time owing to her terrible toothache, and adjured him to be careful of his health. "Remember," she concluded, "you are on your trial."

Somehow, the sight of these words, in black and white, in another person's handwriting, had a stabilizing effect on Chopin. He no longer wondered if the whole thing had been a fantastic dream. Here was objective proof that it had really happened. Mme Wodzinska was his friend, Marie loved him, and he was the happiest of men. True, it would be at least eight months before he could see his adored once again, but, after all, there was much that was interesting and amusing to be met with in Paris. He turned to Jan to be brought up to date in the news of the town.

The year before Liszt had gone off to Switzerland with his beautiful countess. His friends in Paris had occasionally heard of him as revelling in love, practising, composing, and latterly wandering over the countryside with a second lady in his suite—the now famous George Sand. He was evidently inclining towards the conclusion of his protracted honeymoon, for his recent letters were full of questions about Thalberg, who had been delighting Paris by his piano-forte playing, and at last it became clear that he was going to return in order to put Thalberg in his proper place.

The winter, then, found him and the Countess d'Agoult back once more. Liszt immediately visited Chopin, and the old comradeship awoke again, though perhaps Liszt was busier with his lady friends, and Chopin with Matuszynski and Fontana than formerly. Marie d'Agoult and George Sand were now living next door to each other and were a good deal in each other's pockets. Mme Sand inevitably heard a great deal about the Polish composer and Liszt was always begging Chopin to come and meet her. Chopin, however, would not hear of it.

"No, no," he replied, whenever the subject was broached, "we should not get on at all well. I haven't read her novels and she would despise me and find me ignorant. I like simple, unpretending young

girls who think I am wonderful ; not learned literary ladies."

One morning Liszt came to the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin to find Chopin radiant with smiles.

"Look here, Liszt," he said. "I'm so pleased—I've finished that Scherzo that's been bothering me so. It's really rather attractive. . . ." He looked up at Liszt with the expression of a child who has just been given a much longed-for birthday present.

"Let me look at it," said Liszt. But Chopin put his hand over the manuscript.

"No," he replied, "I'd rather play it to you. In fact . . . I thought we might have two or three people in here to-night. Say Franchomme . . . and Mickiewicz . . . and you might bring Mme d'Agoult if she would care to come . . . and then one could see how it goes. . . ."

"Excellent!" cried Liszt. He looked at Chopin and opened his mouth as if to say something, seemed to change his mind, laughed and went off.

The party was successfully arranged, with the addition of Jan Matuszynski and Fontana.

"Have you brought your 'cello?" asked Chopin, when Franchomme appeared.

"Of course not—you are to be the performer to-night. I am taking a well-earned holiday."

"Well earned!" cried Chopin. "Why, you are the laziest man in Paris, and that is why I've not yet written a sonata for you—you would never take the trouble to learn it. I am really unfortunate in my friends—Franchomme plays the 'cello and is too lazy to learn new music, Matuszynski plays the flute and has no lungs left to blow with."

"Otherwise, I suppose, you would have written a sonata for the flute," said Jan, and Frederic tittered.

At this moment the guests for whom they had been waiting arrived. Liszt, Mme d'Agoult—and . . . another lady whose face at least was well-known to

most of those present, and whom Liszt, rather nervously, announced as "Mme Sand." He had, however, chosen well his moment for effecting the somewhat forced introduction. Chopin was too much preoccupied with his new offspring and his desire to win a favourable verdict for it, to pay much attention to one lady more or less. Matuszynski found her a chair, Mickiewicz, who had slipped in like a shadow, leant up against the wall without speaking, the others made themselves comfortable, and Chopin played the Scherzo in B Flat minor.

XVII

AFTER this evening Chopin met Mme Sand fairly often. He did not care for her, and made one or two disagreeable remarks about her to his friends which they remembered afterwards, though he forgot them. All his important, innermost thoughts centred round Marie; and the world of acquaintances, of society, ladies and virtuosos, merely skimmed the surface of his consciousness.

He had hardly any confidantes. His sister Louise was one, but Titus, so far away in Poturzyn, Titus, whom he had not seen for more than six years—no, he could not say anything about it to Titus. He told Jan that he was engaged to Marie Wodzinska, but swore him to secrecy, and would not talk about it, so that Jan, finding it extremely hard to believe that the Count would ever allow his daughter to marry the son of a schoolmaster, did not venture to probe any deeper, and thus did not elicit from Frederic the fact that the engagement was a conditional one.

It was a fact of which he himself was oblivious. The letters from the Countess, with their postscripts by Marie, were so affectionate that he swam in security,

and thought of nothing but the following May or June, when they were to meet. Marie's few lines always seemed to him marvels of delicacy and sweetness; anyone might have read them, yet they conveyed to Frederic's searching eye a priceless fidelity and attachment. "*Carissimo maestro*," she called him; spoke eagerly of seeing his family and especially Louise, in Warsaw, constantly looked forward to the summer, and, most delicious of all, dated one of her notes "*Twilight*."

The letters came fairly often. Mme Wodzinska made use of Chopin to communicate with her son Antoine, who, nominally a student at the Paris University, was inclined to be frivolous and waste his time and get into debt. Once or twice his mother sent him money through Chopin, and she constantly asked her "dear Frederic" to keep an eye on the wild young man and help him if he got into any difficulties. Frederic, needless to say, was very willing to adopt a fraternal attitude towards Antoine, to whom, indeed, he was sincerely attached. He quickly perceived the advantage of what may be called an "official" topic for correspondence, and made the most of it. In the autumn of 1836 Antoine suddenly left Paris and rushed off to Spain where civil war was raging to join the army of General Huesca. The agitated Countess found that letters from Spain to Poland took a terrible time to be delivered, and, indeed, were often lost, and that, as a matter of fact, news came more quickly through Paris. Frederic's good offices were, therefore, more in request than ever.

The only disquieting thing about the Countess's correspondence was her frequent allusions to Frederic's health, and it was the more unfortunate that he did not get through the winter without a severe cold—influenza, he called it—which left a disagreeable cough. What with his influenza and the Countess's hints, he felt depressed, and when Marie reminded

him that he had not yet written anything in her album he took it out and looked at it for a long time, feeling too dull to think of anything. He could not imagine why he was so wretched, and wondered if something dreadful had happened to Marie. He wrote to the Countess to excuse himself for being so stupid . . . and received no reply.

He began now to feel uneasy. Suddenly there rushed up a thousand thoughts which he had previously refused to face. His lack of money, of position, of birth, of health—each seemed in itself a sufficient reason for refusing him Marie's hand. He could not imagine how he could have been so great a fool as to suppose for a moment that such a thing as their marriage was possible. The Countess and her importance in the Wodzinski family all at once faded into insignificance; the Count became of gigantic dimensions, dominating personality and ruthless temper. "A Wodzinska marry a *Szopen*!" he heard him roar, till the very Boulevard seemed echoing with the sound.

He did not altogether abandon himself to irrational instincts. He reasoned with himself, laughed at himself, and at last in a more cheerful mood pulled out the album and set to work on it. On the first page he wrote out a *Lento con gran espressione* which he had given to Louise some years ago as an exercise, and the rest of the book he filled with melodies to poems by Witwicki and Mickiewicz. Then he despatched the book to Marie, and immediately relapsed into a state of gloom.

How long the time seemed before an answer was possible! How long after that he waited till it actually came! At last, one cold afternoon, he came back from a lesson, and turned breathlessly to the little table where his letters were put, with the same straining at his heart with which he had so often looked for one in vain. To-day there was a letter—

and it was from her ! He caught it up, pressed it to his cheek, and gazed at the dear letters that traced his name. Now he was happy again, and with a sigh of content he cut the seal, unfolded the paper and sat down by the little stove to read her beloved words. They were as follows :

“ For FREDERIC CHOPIN,

“ I can only write you a few words to thank you for the pretty book you have sent me. I will not try to tell you how much pleasure it gave me to receive it ; it would be useless. I beg you to accept my sincerest thanks. I hope you will believe in the attachment which we all feel for you, especially your worst pupil and old friend.

“ Good-bye. Mamma sends you her best love. Thérèse often talks of her Szopena.

“ Good-bye. Do not forget us.

“ MARIE.”

The blood in Chopin's veins seemed to flow slowly back into his heart ; his hands and feet became icy cold, and his teeth began to chatter.

“ She loves me no more,” was his instant thought. He turned back to the letter, his hands shaking so much that he could hardly hold it, and in every icicle of a sentence read the confirmation of his fears.

“ What has happened ? Why ? Oh, darling, I love you so much—don't desert me . . . Marie . . . Marie . . .” He gasped out aloud in his agony, and pressed the miserable paper again to his cheek—to his lips. His eyes roved round the room, as if seeking some friendly face . . . he saw nothing but the blank walls, the dead, hostile walls that closed him in.

XVIII

Two days of misery passed. He coughed a great deal, and Jan thought he looked very green, but received no encouragement to enquire into his health or feelings. Then came a letter from the Countess. Chopin waited to open it till he was alone, and then could hardly bring himself to break the seal. . . . It was short, quite affectionate . . . but there was another terrible blow. The Wodzinskis much regretted that they were not going abroad that summer. It was the decision of the Count . . . they were to stay at Sluzewo and economize. Mme Wodzinska joined her thanks to those of Marie for the charming songs . . . if Frederic had any news from Antoine would he let them know ; it was so long since they had heard that they were anxious.

There was but one sentence in all this that conveyed any meaning to Frederic. It was the one in which the visit to Germany was condemned. This second blow—a disappointment to his hopes of eight long months—reduced him to such a state that Jan insisted on sending for a doctor. The result of the visit was a recommendation to go to Ems for the waters. Chopin shrugged his shoulders with complete indifference and complete certainty that nothing but a kind letter from Marie could possibly improve his health.

While he was in this condition he received a letter from Titus suggesting that they should meet and travel in Germany. Frederic felt a conviction that this was Louise's doing ; she had doubtless heard that the Wodzinskis had changed their plans and were spending the summer at Sluzewo, and realizing what this would mean to her brother, had suggested that Titus should attempt to make up for his disappointment. Grateful

as Frederic was both to his friend and his sister he felt quite unequal to a journey and wrote immediately to Titus to refuse.

Almost the day after he received another letter—this time from Antoine, who had been wounded in Spain, and wanted sympathy and, as usual, money. Money Chopin had none to give. He wrote at once to the Countess, forcing himself to adopt a cheerful tone, and without mentioning the fact that Antoine was wounded, for fear of alarming her unnecessarily, urged her to send him a speedy remittance.

Chopin's cough and general health had now improved a little, and Jan was anxious to get him out of Paris. He was convinced that Chopin's condition was largely due to the letters he was receiving from Sluzewo, and felt that a change of surroundings would be most salutary for him. He even went so far as to hint to Liszt that Nohant would be a pleasant place for a summer holiday. The hint was duly transmitted, and Mme Sand wrote a delighted and eager invitation; but to Jan's annoyance, Chopin, after some hesitation, refused to go. At last he told Jan, rather crossly, that as it seemed he couldn't endure his company any more he had arranged to go to London for a few weeks with Camille Pleyel and Stanislas Kozmian; and though Jan could not say he thought London as suitable a place for an invalid as Nohant, he was thankful that Chopin expressed a wish to go anywhere.

Directly Chopin started on this journey he put on his old cloak of high spirits and gaiety. Pleyel, who had been warned by Matuszynski that the pianist was far from well, could hardly believe his eyes at Chopin's pranks, and certainly made no attempt to refrain from roaring with laughter at them. Once in London Pleyel took Chopin off to visit Broadwood's piano shop, but the latter would only consent to go on condition that a strict *incognito* should be preserved.

Accordingly, when Mr. James Broadwood appeared to do the honours to his fellow piano-maker, Pleyel, Chopin was merely introduced as "M. Fritz," and as "M. Fritz" was invited with Pleyel to dine with the Broadwoods at Bryanston Square. This was a joke after Chopin's own heart. He entered completely into the amusement of being the shy young gentleman, "fond of music," who "played a little," and who, consequently, was politely invited by the hostess after dinner to "give us a little music." Once at the piano Chopin thought of nothing but that he was playing; he played the Polonaise in C sharp minor, and after the first rush of octaves—passionate, resonant, masterful—the host and hostess looked at each other in amazement. Was this "playing a little"? It was very soon clear that this was not some "M. Fritz" or other, but a distinguished pianist. When the pellucid tones of the E major section were heard, followed by the subdued tenderness of the *meno mosso*, no doubt was left at all. There was only one performer in the world who could produce such sounds. They looked the question at Pleyel, who smiled and nodded, and when the Polonaise was over they turned to their guest in protest.

"Mr. Fritz do you call yourself!" cried Mrs. Broadwood, stepping forward. "Yes, perhaps, but that is not all! Come, confess, sir; there is something to follow. It is Mr. Fritz Cho——"

"Hush, hush," cried Chopin laughing and shaking his head.

"But it is so, is it not?" insisted Mrs. Broadwood. "Oh, I'm sure no one but you could play like that; besides, M. Pleyel has given you away."

Chopin could not help enjoying the compliment, and the intense gratification of his host and hostess. He was very obliging, and played for a long time. He went back to the lodgings with Pleyel, laughing and chattering, feeling in reality lighter hearted than he

had done for a long time. Alas, a letter was waiting for him—a letter from the Countess. It was the most depressing one he had had yet. She now admitted that she had spoken to the Count, that the Count would not hear of an engagement for a moment, that he had forbidden a meeting in Germany, and that he had told Marie she was not to write to Chopin. The Countess still assured Frederic that she could bring him round, but it was clear that she no longer believed it herself.

Chopin spent all the night in coughing, and told Pleyel in the morning that he could go nowhere and see no one. Pleyel was amazed at the change in his appearance since the previous evening, and supposed, with much head-shaking, that it was walking home at night in this fearful climate. Certainly no one would have thought in July . . .

After ten days Chopin crept back to Paris. He had not yet quite given up hope . . . a more encouraging letter might still come, and in Paris he would get it the sooner. A month passed, and the final blow fell. Marie was betrothed to Count Joseph Skarbek, the son of Chopin's godfather.

MAJORCA AND NOHANT

CHAPTER IV

MAJORCA AND NOHANT

I

THE gradual nature of Chopin's disillusionment—the long months throughout which he had been slowly realizing that his engagement to Marie was a one-sided dream—did much to lessen the pain he felt when he understood at last that all was ended. The conclusive fact that she was to marry someone else was actually a relief ; it put a stop to the torture—renewed every day, with an increasing pang—of looking for letters that did not come, or that came at last, after the slow agony of disappointed expectation, to inflict the most poignant wound of all. If sometimes, in his desolation, he cried out to himself that he could have borne anything, if he could also have hoped, he knew in his heart that this was not true, and that the death of his hope had saved him from more terrible things. He was singularly unjealous, and the thought of Marie as a wife only made him hope that she would be happy . . . as happy with that other as *he* would have made her. He was sometimes tormented by his ignorance of what was going on in her mind—he speculated as to whether she regretted him and was only marrying from filial obedience, or whether she had never really cared for him, and found in Joseph Skarbek her true ideal . . . but he did not much imagine or analyse her possible feelings. Perhaps he felt that they were too remote, too difficult for him to comprehend ; perhaps he feared

that to understand too well would be an added pang. In his calmer moments he extracted a curious pleasure in contemplating her as a happy wife, moving serene and smiling in the security of the habitual trust, mutual interest and quiet affection which are born of the successful marriage, and of which his parents had always offered such a wonderful example.

Meanwhile he plunged once more into the maelstrom of society. His princesses found him as exquisite, his companions as entertaining and high-spirited as ever ; perhaps his pupils could have told a different tale, of his increasing irritability. The unhappy Gutmann went through some unpleasant scenes, and Mlle de Sudre was more than once reduced to tears.

She was rather a sentimental young lady, and Chopin had unfortunately one day said to her :

" Mettez-y donc toute votre âme ! "

Up to that day she had been somewhat diffident of her technical powers and her thoughts had been concentrated on them. Now she understood why she had not made as much impression on the master as she had hoped . . . the fault should be remedied. At the next lesson she brought out her Nocturne, and threw herself into it with enthusiasm ; *rubatos, ritardandos, stringendos*—just as she was lingering soulfully on a high note Chopin's voice broke in :

" I beg you to be seated." He spoke gently, but with obvious sarcasm. She broke off, horrified, and stared at him.

" Please do not exaggerate like that," he pursued. " Play in strict time ; and do try to get more smoothness. Begin again, there."

She recommenced, this time nervously, unhappily. Chopin suddenly got up and began walking about the room. What on earth was she doing ? After moaning and whining and jerking she was phrasing idiotically, playing wrong notes, thumping . . . he felt that if he spoke he should shout or say something offensive—

but how could he endure this miserable strumming ? . . . He had picked up a piece of paper from his desk and began tearing it to pieces . . . all at once a preposterous *ritenuto* was too much for him ; he flung the pieces of paper into the air and as they fell like snow around him he called out loudly, almost stridently :

“ But . . . is it a dog howling ? ”

Mlle de Sudre took her hands off the piano and burst into tears. Immediately Chopin relented.

“ Come, come, Mademoiselle,” he said very gently. “ You must forgive me. Do not punish me for my rudeness by weeping like that. . . . You will get on very nicely . . . but I think just at present I should leave that Nocturne alone . . . suppose you take this, out of Clementi’s *Gradus ad Parnassum*. . . . ”

He ended the lesson by playing a couple of Mazurkas to her, and as after all she was very fond of music, she confided to her *dame de compagnie* on the way home that really it had been quite worth it. It is not certain that Chopin thought the same, when he took his fee of twenty francs off the mantelpiece.

This winter again he was ill, and obliged to spend several days in bed. He was rather cross with Jan, who was inclined to shake his head, and say the winters in Paris were too cold for him ; the truth is he hated being deprived of society and being thrown back on his own melancholy thoughts. As soon as Jan would allow it he was up and out, calling on his lady friends and alternately entrancing them with his music and convulsing them by his jokes.

One evening, at a big evening party at the house of the Marquis de Custine, Mme Sand came up to speak to him.

“ How are you ? ” she asked. “ I heard at Mme Marliani’s that you had been ill—and, indeed, you are not looking well.”

“ Only a little cough,” he replied. “ It is apt to come on in the winter. . . . ”

"Yes," she said, smiling, "and to last into the summer as well. . . . I wish you had come to Nohant last year to see if the air of Berry would not do you good . . . you must come this summer instead."

Chopin bowed, waved his hands, and murmured something about being only too delighted.

"Well, and now I am beside you I am going to ask you, when the time comes for music, if you will be so very kind as to play—what I have never heard since—the piece you played the first time we met."

"I am afraid," replied Chopin, with a slight sense of uneasiness, "that, though it is quite unpardonable, I have totally forgotten what piece that is."

"It begins with a question," answered Mme Sand. "A question twice repeated. It is answered, somewhat tentatively, and then again twice repeated. . . ."

"Oh yes," cried Chopin. "I know—you mean the Scherzo in B Flat minor . . . of course . . . and you were there the first night I played it—how clever of you to remember it!"

At that moment his hostess advanced to take him to the piano. He went off with the pleasant sensation of being understood, and as he preluded on the unknown piano to get the feel of it, ending in the key of B Flat minor, he said to himself:

"*La Sand* is by no means stupid. . . ."

II

ONE day Chopin received a visit from a Polish musician named Nowakowski, who had just arrived in Paris. After telling Chopin all the news from Warsaw, especially of Chopin's family, he went on to make a request.

"I should be so much obliged if you could give me introductions to some of the pianists here—there are some I am most anxious to meet. . . ."

"I'll do what I can," replied Chopin, "whom in particular do you wish to see?"

"Well," said Nowakowski. "There are Kalkbrenner—Pixis of the old school . . . but of course Liszt is one I should not like to miss. . . ."

"If that is your selection," said Chopin gravely, but with the corners of his lips quivering, "I can save you the trouble of going to different ends of Paris to make their acquaintance. This is Kalkbrenner. . . . He sat down, gave his features a twist, pushed back his hair, and played in the style of Kalkbrenner. . . . "This is Liszt"—another change of expression, and a pull to his cravat. . . . "And this—allow me to introduce you—is M. Pixis."

Nowakowski was much entertained, and laughed so heartily at the performance that Chopin invited him to the theatre the next evening. They had a box, and in the first entr'acte Chopin jumped up and went out without saying anything to his guest. The truth was he had just noticed Pixis in one part of the theatre, and Liszt in another, and remembering Nowakowski's wish to meet these gentlemen he dashed out to invite them to his box. He went first to Pixis.

"M. Pixis," he cried, "there is a compatriot of mine in my box—Number 4—who wishes to be introduced to you—do go there—he will be most highly gratified—while I go to the *avant-scènes* and catch Liszt. . . . I shall be back in one moment."

Pixis, secretly pleased at the compliment, but keeping a very solemn face, repaired to Box 4 and seated himself. Nowakowski, turning round, burst out laughing.

"My dear Chopin!" he cried, "do stop playing the fool here. . . ."

"Playing the fool!" said Pixis, utterly confounded, "what do you mean? And why do you call me Chopin?"

"Don't, don't," gasped Nowakowski. "How absurdly you speak . . . I shall die of laughter. . . ."

"Sir! I speak absurdly!" Pixis uttered these words with increasing pomposity till Nowakowski's almost hysterical laughter began to make him suspect that he was in a box with a lunatic.

At this moment, fortunately for all, the door opened and Chopin and Liszt came in.

"Monsieur," said Pixis in a stage whisper, "is your compatriot a maniac?"

One might really have thought so, to see Nowakowski's change of expression. His jaw fell, his eyeballs protruded, he gazed impotently from Chopin to Pixis, from Pixis to Chopin.

"But he? . . . then you . . . ?" he stammered helplessly.

Pixis burst out, still in his stage whisper.

"Sir, he suffers from the madness of delusions—just now he called *me Chopin*! He thinks. . . ."

But instantly what he thought and the reason for it became obvious to both Chopin and Nowakowski, and while Nowakowski turned scarlet with the embarrassment of the situation, Chopin frankly burst out laughing.

"Forgive me, M. Pixis," he said at last with his very sweetest smile, "but the other day I was foolish enough to try to give my friend some idea of your wonderful pianistic style, and to manage it the better—to give, as it were, a little local colour—I turned up my collar like you, and pulled down the sleeves of my coat. In the darkness of this box he doubtless thought I was at it again—you must forgive us both. When he has once heard you play in reality he will know how little I approach you."

"So long as he is not a lunatic," said Pixis, doubtfully, looking over the top of his spectacles first at Chopin, then at Nowakowski . . . "and pray, sir," to Liszt, "what are *you* laughing at?"

Liszt was laughing because he had so often seen this same imitation of Pixis, and was highly amused at Nowakowski's mistake, and the way in which Chopin had pacified the victim.

After the performance he put his arm through Nowakowski's as they walked home and made him tell the whole tale.

"Delightful!" he said at the end, "what an astonishing mimic he is. . . . And have you noticed that no matter what grimace he makes, he never looks ugly?"

III

MME SAND was in Paris seeing her lawyers and making the last arrangements for her separation from her uncongenial husband M. Dudevant. She met Chopin frequently at the houses of common friends, and he, always finding her sympathetic and quick at understanding him, formed the habit of frequently calling on her in the afternoons before dinner, and sitting for some time in her quiet, comfortable room, nearly always perfumed by a large bowl of violets.

On one of these occasions the name Liszt was mentioned, and Chopin, in a burst that somewhat surprised himself, said :

"It is a pity he is not more open—he always has some secret or other on hand—I hate secrets. . . ." Suddenly he remembered the intimacy between Liszt and Mme d'Agoult, and Mme Sand ; he stopped, and said very gently :

"I beg your pardon—I had forgotten for the moment that he is your friend—it was inexcusable to say such a thing. . . ."

Mme Sand turned towards him ; suddenly it flashed upon him for the first time that she was beautiful—her straight nose, her rich wavy black hair falling to her shoulders, her large, dark, deep eyes, her full, unsmiling lips gave her a strange, fascinating appearance. . . . He looked at her with such new interest, such surprised admiration, that he hardly heard what she was saying . . . only realized vaguely that she had formerly been the friend of Liszt and Marie d'Agoult, but that she had found herself mistaken in them. That evening, when he took her hand in his to say good-bye, he kissed it—he had often done so before ;

he looked into her eyes—he had perhaps done that before; but to-night he felt there was something significant in these actions . . . he wondered if she felt it too.

Somehow, the chief feeling of which he was conscious after this conversation, was of increased hostility towards Liszt. He was in no mood, the next time he met him, for the kind of jokes with which Liszt assailed him. Liszt began by begging Chopin to walk down the Boulevard with him and see who could pick up the prettiest young woman in half-an-hour; Chopin thought that kind of joke in exceedingly bad taste, nor was he at all certain that it was altogether a joke. He endured Liszt's increasing hilarity as long as he could, and then went out of the room, leaving him to take himself off when solitary laughter ceased to amuse him.

Two days after this Liszt had not yet tired of the joke. One evening rather late, Chopin came home from a party and immediately on entering his rooms suspected that some unauthorized person had managed to get in. At first he was afraid it must have been burglars—but no, everything seemed to be there still—only things had been moved—two people had evidently had some wine—there was an empty bottle and two dirty glasses on a table. He looked everywhere, but nothing was missing. At last he went to his bedroom. It was immediately obvious to what purpose the room had been put . . . some hairpins were lying on the dressing-table and beside them was a half-torn envelope addressed to Liszt. . . .

Chopin went back into his study, sat down and hid his face in his hands. His fury against Liszt, fed by a thousand irritations, rivalries, disapprovals, was whirled, by this last outrage, into a flood of passion that shook him physically. His rage swept away all reasoning, all coherent thought, and when in the chilly morning it died away, it left him with a cold

rigid resolve. As soon as it was at all possible to rouse anyone he went to Franchomme—Franchomme he had decided should be his intermediary—woke him up and told him the whole story, with white but untrembling lips.

“I shall be much obliged,” he concluded, “if you will go to him and tell him that I do not wish to speak to him again. It will be impossible, I suppose, to avoid *seeing* him in other people’s drawing-rooms, but he will be wise to keep out of my way. It will be exceedingly kind of you to do this message at once, as I feel I cannot go back to those rooms till I am *certain* he will not appear, to explain something for which there is no explanation.”

Franchomme saw that remonstrance would be useless. He did as Chopin asked him, and it was many years before Chopin and Liszt met again.

IV

WHEN Chopin went to see Mme Sand that afternoon she cast one glance at him, then pulled up an arm-chair, made him comfortable in it, and told her maid to bring in some coffee. Chopin, white and exhausted, made no protest; he leaned back with a sigh, drank the hot coffee when it came, and then closed his eyes and sat for a long time silent. At last he looked up. She was sitting on the floor in front of the open fireplace, gazing into the fire with a vacant expression—rather a stupid expression, Chopin thought, smiling to himself. He was relieved at her not asking questions or making any fuss. It was soothing to lie back and watch her doing nothing. Presently he said in a low voice:

“How nice it is to sit here without saying any-

thing. . . .” She turned round and smiled at him ; then turned back to the fire. Again they remained silent and motionless, and Chopin became aware of an atmosphere of repose. She seemed so calm, so indifferent, that he too became calm and indifferent . . . all his agitations, his misfortunes, seemed to drop away from him . . . he felt safe, and at anchor. He spoke again.

“ When I was quite a little boy—I suppose not more than four—I went for a walk with my mother. I must have stayed behind, playing ; at any rate I suddenly found I was all alone—quite alone in the world. It was dreadful—so desolate, so terrifying. I began to cry and to run—in what direction I didn’t know—anywhere, anywhere—when suddenly, as I was almost exhausted with sobbing and breathlessness, there was my mother. She took hold of my hand and smiled at me, and then I knew I was safe. . . . What a foolish story. . . .”

She looked at him gravely, and put her hand on his knee.

“ Poor little boy,” she said ; and after a pause, “ so you have been lost again ? ”

“ Oh, yes,” he exclaimed, “ I have indeed
. . . I . . . ” but he could not go on.

“ Tell me,” she said ; and in her sombre eyes he seemed to see a real care, a real solicitude, warming and supporting.

“ It was a girl I loved . . . I imagined she loved me and that we were to be married . . . but her parents thought I was not good enough and refused their consent ; and she married someone else . . . a count . . . another foolish story, isn’t it ? ”

“ So they thought a count was worth more than a great genius . . . poor Chopin . . . yes ; *I* know how much it hurts. . . .”

Rather shyly he put his hand on hers. She did not move at all, and again there fell over them that

enveloping silence. It lasted until it was time for Chopin to go. As they stood up he took both her hands in his and pressed them.

"Thank you, my friend," he said. "I came to-day tired and unhappy, and you have given me rest and peace."

After this their intimacy proceeded rapidly. Chopin's visits became more and more frequent until if he was a day without seeing her he felt uncomfortable. With her he felt more at ease than anywhere else. It was not necessary for him to mask his weariness or depression, yet she provided the gentle, yielding atmosphere in search of which he pursued female society. In her room his aggressiveness and his aristocratic manner could alike be allowed to drop. Not that he ever became anything but polite—only there was no strain about it—it was more, as he said to himself, like being at home, in the midst of his family.

One evening, after two or three particularly vexatious music lessons he arrived at her flat in a state of great irritation. He would not sit down, he would not play, he would not drink either wine or coffee. He roved about her room, picking up and examining different objects, and answering her remarks shortly and vaguely.

At last she laughed.

"My dear Chopin," she said, "your nerves are out of order. You ought to come away with me to Nohant for the summer."

Chopin stopped his wanderings and began looking at a china figure.

"What is the good of my going to Nohant?" he muttered.

"What is the good?" she asked, surprised, "why the fresh air, and the quietness, the absence of intruders, the good milk and butter—all this would make you a different creature."

"I don't know why you think so."

"Everyone feels well in Berry. Do come. I am going next week."

"So soon! Ah! I knew this could not last much longer—I have been too happy."

"But come with me, and our happiness can continue."

"No." Chopin was looking at the china ornament intently, but he spoke with great decision. "No, George, our happiness cannot, as you say, continue. It must either stop altogether—or it must increase."

"Ah! . . ." George Sand understood. She stood up, and going to where he was put her hand on his arm and obliged him to look at her. He was trembling; he thought he had never seen such a wonderful face—so grand, so serene, so open. . . .

"Chopin," she said, and her voice too shook when she began to speak, but grew steadier as she went on, "Chopin, you know a little about me yourself, but you have doubtless heard much that is evil said of me as well. I do not care to defend myself, but if there is any question you would like to ask me, ask, and I will answer it sincerely."

Chopin smiled, proudly.

"I don't want to ask you anything. Your past life is your own. I too—you know, I can't speak of romantic feelings like a young man. Only," and he turned rather pale, "are you going to make me happy? or unhappy?"

The colour rushed to her cheek and receded almost as quickly. This exquisite creature, this flame of beauty and genius who stood before her, strangely remote, yet strangely dependent . . . she was seized by a tide of tenderness for him, that invaded her, swift, powerful and sweet.

"Come to Nohant," she said, looking into his bright eyes with her dark ones, "come to Nohant, and I will try to make you happier than you have ever been before."

V

THEY went to Nohant and she made him happy.

It was a beautiful summer ; blue skies, white clouds flying across them, light breezes stirring the heavy green foliage and refreshing when it seemed almost too hot, masses of beautiful flowers, and the song of the nightingale, made a perfect frame for their happiness.

They talked of their childhood ; Frederic told her of Constance and Marie, but above all of his mother, and the happiness of his childhood. George told him of her happier days and did not speak of the stormy scenes that had so often disturbed her youth.

During the morning George was occupied with her household, and Chopin worked at the piano or with his manuscripts. The long summer afternoons they spent on the terrace together, silent, reading, or talking, as it pleased them best, with a daily growing sense of intimacy. In the evening Frederic played or George read aloud, and it was a doubled happiness for each one to show the other their dreams, their creations.

They were not quite alone. Maurice and Solange, George's children, were there, and they soon adored Chopin, who could make such funny faces and be so amusing. Maurice, about fourteen, did not look it, for he was ill, suffering from rheumatism and a heart complaint—George confided to Chopin that she had snatched him away from his father only just in time to save him from something serious. The mother and son adored each other and George was never quite easy, even when she was with Chopin, unless she knew that Maurice was happy.

Solange was another story. At nine years old she showed a spirit of determination, a love of her own way and a quickness of temper that foretold a strong

character. There were however some signs that it might not be an agreeable one. She was quarrelsome, sometimes even spiteful, inclined to be vain and affected, and constantly in violent opposition to her mother. She was, however, as George repeated at intervals, only nine years old, and there was plenty of time for a reformation.

One morning a loud clatter, shouting, stamping, banging of doors in the stone hall made Chopin jump up from the piano in horror. The noise continued, increasing rather than subsiding and Chopin was beginning to wonder if a regiment of dragoons had been billeted on them, when George entered from the dining-room.

"My brother is here," she said, "will you come?"

He went into the dining-room. There stood a big, red-faced man, his feet astride, his mouth open, roaring with laughter and chaffing the maid, Françoise, in a voice of thunder.

George put her hand on his arm.

"Hippolyte," she said, "I want to introduce you to M. Chopin, the great composer and pianist."

He turned round, and at the sight of the frail, elegant figure before him, he seemed abashed. In any case, he removed his hat from his rough head, attempted a bow, and growled in a voice that was meant to be subdued:

"Honour, I'm sure. Hope the gentleman is enjoying his stay in Berry. . . ."

At that moment Françoise brought in a tray with wine and glasses on it; Chopin was amazed to see the quantity he gulped down and no longer wondered at his red face. . . .

"Well," said George, when Hippolyte with a tremendous hullabaloo had taken himself off, "and what did you think of my brother?"

"There is something very attractive about him . . . but does he always talk so loud?"

For a fortnight there were no other guests besides Chopin. Then others came—Grzymala, a Pole, whom Chopin had known slightly in Paris, and with whom he soon became intimate in the friendly atmosphere of Nohant; Delacroix, the great painter, whose love of music and especially of Mozart opened the way to Chopin's heart; M. and Mme Marliani, Spaniards, who talked about the beauties of Spain and the genius of Mendizabal, the fallen Prime Minister.

There were endless discussions on every conceivable topic. Chopin, who would never talk politics, and hardly ever æsthetics, explained to Delacroix at great length the superiority of Pleyel's pianos over all others, and spent their evenings, as Delacroix said, in demonstrating it. The audience was appreciative, and Chopin, as usual in such circumstances, played divinely.

Yes, he was happy.

VI

WHEN Chopin returned to Paris he was troubled to find Jan looking very ill. He had been working too hard, Chopin thought, and not eating enough, or getting enough sleep. In reality he was suffering again from his lungs, and as the autumn went on looked worse and worse, and began coughing painfully. Chopin, on the other hand, seemed better. His summer at Nohant had certainly been good for him, though as the cold weather approached his friends told him that he ought to go South for the winter.

One day he was surprised by a visit from Anton Wodzinski, of whom he had heard nothing since Marie's engagement. He seemed, indeed, somewhat embarrassed, and took a long time before he could say what he wanted to say. This turned out to be that he was in terrible straits for money, but he was expecting

a remittance in a month and if Chopin could possibly let him have 500 francs to go on with he would be eternally obliged to him. Chopin did not feel particularly enthusiastic about the loan, but it was always difficult to him to refuse money to a compatriot, and when Anton looked at him with large pathetic eyes and drooping lips, another face came so persistently before his mind that he fetched him the money, in order, he said to himself a little disingenuously, to get him out of the room. What was his annoyance to find that the very same day Anton had succeeded in borrowing 700 francs from Matuszynski. The remittance next month would have to be a large one if they were both of them to be paid.

He continued to see a good deal of Grzymala. Grzymala wanted a portrait of him, and persuaded him to sit to a Pole called Kwiatkowski who had already done a sketch of him that George Sand liked and that Chopin himself tolerated. As he was sitting one morning, Stephen Heller, whom he had met years before at Warsaw, came to see him. He was a messenger, he said, from Schumann, who, knowing that he was going to Paris, had begged him to deliver a present to his adored Chopin. Chopin smiled faintly, and took the parcel Heller gave him. It was a copy of Schumann's *Carnaval*, beautifully printed and richly bound. Chopin opened it, looked at the title page and the binding, then put it down, saying coldly :

"How beautifully they get up these things in Germany !"

Heller was surprised and a little horrified, though he did not quite venture to make any comment ; but weeks afterwards Fontana found the volume in a shelf, its leaves still uncut.

When George Sand came to Paris she was full of a new scheme—an annoying one, it seemed to Chopin, for it meant parting from her for the whole winter.

She had determined to take Maurice away to the South during the cold weather, to see if it would not be good for his rheumatism, and of course Solange would have to go too. She had fixed on Majorca as the place, and was going to start in November. Chopin began to be very much depressed at the thought. He had endured being in Paris without her, because he knew it was only for a few weeks ; if it was to be a case of months he did not know how he could bear it.

" I wish I were in Maurice's place," he said one day with a profound sigh : " I am certain those blue skies would soon cure my cough, whereas if I stay here—alone——"

" My dear Chopin, don't talk like that . . . ; you don't really want to go to Majorca, do you ? "

" *You* are going there, aren't you ? "

" Of course it would be delightful to have you with us, and no doubt it would be good for you. . . . "

" Don't you want me to get well, then ? "

" Dearest Frédéric, don't talk like that. . . . You know how much I care for your health. . . . I couldn't believe you meant it seriously."

" But why not ? "

" Because I thought you dreaded leaving Paris—Jan, your piano, your room ; you know what a terrible event the change of the smallest habit is for you—think what it will be to go to Majorca ! "

" You exaggerate so dreadfully ; certainly, I should hate to go off by myself, but with you things would be very different."

George could not help smiling ; he took so calmly for granted that she would undertake all the responsibilities and disagreeables of the journey . . . somehow, it was rather endearing of him—he *was* rather like Maurice, in some ways.

This question, however, of his accompanying them to Majorca had to be considered seriously. After all, if he was anxious to go, there was no apparent reason

against it ; it would obviously be good for his general health, and he seemed so well that George Sand had no fears of any illness. As far as she personally was concerned the idea of having him with her was delightful ; a real companion for herself—and that companion Chopin—seemed all that was wanting to make the trip perfect.

So it was agreed upon. Chopin was really pleased, and began to look forward to the expedition with a gusto he had not felt for a long, long time. There were indeed only two flaws in his satisfaction. One was, that he had not enough money, and was obliged to borrow a thousand francs from M. Leo, a rich banker friend ; the other, that he did not want everyone to know he was going away with George Sand. To stay with her at Nohant was one thing—everybody did that—it meant nothing ; but he was certain that if he were known to be spending the winter alone with her at Majorca he would be gossiped about all over Paris. Consequently, he was extremely secretive about his plans. Jan of course knew—Jan knew everything that concerned him ; Grzymala knew, for George had told him. The only other one of his friends in whom Chopin confided was Fontana, who had agreed to undertake his business affairs with publishers, landlords, debtors and creditors, and in general to look after his correspondence in his absence. Jan was, alas, too ill to be asked for these friendly services.

George Sand and Chopin were to meet towards the middle of November at Perpignan. She was to start first and travel in a leisurely fashion, visiting Avignon, Vaucluse, Nîmes, on the way, while Chopin was to go there direct, starting later, and taking only four days and four nights over it.

“ And listen, Chopin,” said George, the night before she set off, “ we shall stop three days at Perpignan, and if after all you do not appear we shall not be the least surprised, but go on without you.”

VII

WHAT kind of journey can be more delightful than a journey south in November? One starts in cold, rain and fog, huddling oneself in rugs and furs from the inclemency of penetrating damp, or piercing east winds, and from hour to hour, as one creeps nearer to the sun, the rain ceases, the mists disperse, the winds drop, till at last one wakes up and finds oneself in the radiant country the French call Noon.

The last day or two of travelling had been so soothing that in spite of his four nights in a mail-coach, Chopin arrived at Perpignan cheerful and almost fresh. Maurice met him at the post-house, jumping about like an india-rubber ball. The hotel, he said, was only across the square—the man would bring Chopin's luggage over while they went on.

How delightful it was to feel that they were all pleased to see him! Solange jumped up and threw her arms round his neck, Françoise curtsied over and over again, beaming her satisfaction, and George—her slow, beautiful smile welcomed him without words, and he felt once more, how away from her was exile, with her, home.

They continued their journey slowly, stopping when they felt inclined, and enjoying it all. The crossing from Port-Vendres to Barcelona was calm and agreeable. They spent some days in Barcelona, enjoying the brilliant sun and the fine landscapes, and amazed at the indifference of the Barcelonians to the civil war still raging in the city, it seemed, at night, though successfully banished behind the scenes during the day.

The voyage from Barcelona to Palma was again a

pleasant one. The night was dark, so that the phosphorescent tail in the wake of the ship was clearly visible, and so warm that Frederic and George stayed up on deck. Through the long, still night, they listened drowsily to the soft sweet melody of the steersman keeping himself awake by his strange undulating chant, that rose and fell gently with queer rhythms and queerer modulations. With the morning they saw before them the tall cliffs of Majorca, and in a short time they landed at Palma.

Here, an unpleasant surprise awaited them. Having seen the luggage taken out of the boat and piled up on the wharf, Mme Sand turned to one of the men lounging near by, and asked him to take their things to the hotel. The man grinned and shook his head. At first she thought he did not understand her, and tried him with *albergo*, and even *auberge*. In vain; he and all the group who had collected to listen to the foreign lady, emphatically shook their heads and shrugged their shoulders. Could it be—was it, was it possible there was *no* hotel in Palma? They turned to the captain, with whom at any rate they could communicate, and he confirmed their fears; no, Palma had no hotel.

George and Frederic stared at each other in horror; then George pulled herself together. Something must be done, and clearly she was the one to do it.

"Do you know anyone, then, who would let us some rooms?" she asked, turning to the captain again.

"You might try Don Gaspar, behind the Palacio Real," he said doubtfully, scratching his head, "but I don't think there are many places. . . . Here, Manoel," to his ship's boy, "take the lady to Don Gaspar."

"You stay here," said George to Chopin, "and if it will do I will come back for you and the luggage. . . ."

She had however already made up her mind, from the way the captain spoke, that *whatever* it was like

she would take it if Don Gaspar would let it. They would then be certain of a roof over their heads, and could, at their leisure, find something really comfortable.

It was fortunate she had thus made up her mind in advance. After knocking at Don Gaspar's door for twenty minutes they were at last admitted, and after mentioning the captain, and her desire for apartments, the apartments, with many speeches, explanations and compliments were shown; they fell below her worst fears. Two bare rooms, with whitewashed walls, truckle beds, rush-bottomed chairs and nothing else, neither particularly clean, nor particularly airy, were what met her eye. For a moment she hesitated; then, telling herself that she must at least be sure of beds for Chopin and the children, and that they need not stay a moment after she had found something better, she closed with the landlord's somewhat exorbitant demands and rushed back to her flock.

VIII

THE next two days were spent in considerable discomfort. In their "apartments" they had to contend with fleas and scorpions, while feeding on what seemed a diet of pepper and garlic. Solange began to get cross, and Chopin melancholy, while George and Maurice, with indefatigable energy, visited each house in Palma which was reported to have lodgings, not to mention a dozen more, simply on speculation. In vain; no rooms any better than what they already had could be found anywhere, and it became more and more clear that there was nothing for it but to return to Barcelona.

Chopin had been out to look at the great yellow

Cathedral, and had come back rather scornful of its gaunt appearance, and the emptiness and darkness of the interior, and he was sitting miserably on a small chair by the window, when the door burst open and George appeared, radiant.

"Cheer up, Frédéric," she cried, "I have found a most charming house—Señor Gomez will let us have his villa a little way out of Palma, for fifty francs a month. I went out to look at it before saying anything to you, and really it is not at all bad. The furniture, of course, is simplicity itself, but the garden is beautiful—olives, orange trees and cedars—and besides, if that turns out unsuitable, I have heard of an abandoned Carthusian monastery, up in the hills, where we can all have cells! Oh, yes, I feel now that our sorrows are over!"

Chopin was reanimated by her news and by her enthusiasm. They were to move into the House of Winds the next day, and Palma immediately took on a different aspect. Instead of being a dirty, smelly town with narrow streets and disagreeable inhabitants, it blossomed out with palms, aloes, cactus trees, lemon trees and fig trees, the sky was a turquoise, the sea was azure, the hills were emeralds, the walls were Moorish, the town was African, and even at night romantic lovers sang and played the guitar to beautiful, unseen ladies on vast balconies overhung by odorous vines.

The move to the suburb establishment was successfully carried out, and their happiness began. While George and the children wandered about the country, admiring and wondering at everything and making collections of natural curiosities to the stupefaction or horror of the natives, Chopin was working at his Preludes, rewriting, adding, curtailings, copying. In the evenings they sat on the lovely terrace, gazing out at the rich valley, Palma and the Cathedral rising in yellow blocks at its foot, the sea, blue and sparkling, beyond. There was only one drawback—only one

blot on the perfection—the piano that Chopin had ordered to be sent by Pleyel from Paris had not arrived.

Their paradise was, however, to last but a short time. They had not been there very long when the weather changed. The wind veered, and rain began to fall; and the country which was adapted to sunshine and warmth, became, in wet and cold, as destestable as it had been charming. It was indeed not really cold, but the continuous damp, making the very walls of the rooms swell, and the lack of any means of heating except charcoal braziers, made them feel, as George said, “as if they had ice on their shoulders.”

The second day of the deluge Chopin began to cough, and with alarming rapidity became very ill. George Sand rushed into Palma and finding from the French consul the name of the best doctor there, drove him out to the House of the Winds. He examined the patient, and smilingly informed them there was really nothing the matter.

“Only keep him warm—perhaps it will be best not to go out while the rain lasts—no, it is not necessary to prescribe medicine—he will soon be better. . . . Ah, yes . . . forty-five francs, Madame, if you please.”

Unfortunately he was not soon better, and George, after two days of anxiety, went again to Palma for another doctor.

“Have you not had *two* doctors for the gentleman?” asked Damiano, the gardener, one morning.

“Yes,” said Françoise with a sigh, “and a third is to come—but they do not do him much good.”

“And does he not cough a great deal?”

“Terribly—as if he were coughing his heart up. . . .”

“You have not sent for a priest though? And last Sunday you none of you went to Mass. . . .”

“Send for a priest! The poor gentleman is not ill enough for that yet!” exclaimed the indignant Françoise. But Damiano shook his head.

“Three doctors, no priest, no Mass, and he coughs . . .

the gentleman is an atheist and a consumptive . . . he will infect us with his consumption and drag us to Hell after him. . . . *I will work no more for such folk. . . .*"

That night George Sand was up a great deal, trying to make Frederic more comfortable, or when that was impossible, to soothe and encourage him. In the morning, her first thought was as usual the sky. It was as overcast as it had been for days, and she groaned to herself, wondering if the cough *could* stop in such weather. At that moment Françoise brought her a letter. It was from Señor Gomez, their landlord, informing them that he understood there was among them a sufferer from a disease with which the house was being infected and the lives of its owner and family threatened; in consequence of which Señor Gomez requested that they would, with as little delay as possible, remove themselves and their belongings from his threshold.

George took her head in her hands and groaned with perplexity. "God knows," she thought, "I don't want to stay in this miserable plaster hole . . . another week of rain here and we should all be drowned . . . but how am I to move Chopin? . . . and where can I move him?"

Suddenly she remembered the abandoned Carthusian monastery in Valdemosa. She knew the cells in it could be rented for a small sum—she knew that a set already furnished was to be had immediately . . . the solution was found—they would go to Valdemosa.

IX

AFTER all, the rain was by no means continuous. Two days of sunshine improved Chopin wonderfully, and by a fortunate chance the drive up to Valdemosa was accomplished on a rainless day. The relief at reaching the spot—the strange beauty of the view, hung as the convent seemed, between sea and sky—the rapture of the children and the ecstasy of George Sand, all combined with the slightly improved weather to reanimate him altogether. Still without news from Pleyel, he had had carried up a wretched little Majorcan instrument, from which he somehow managed to extract beautiful sounds, though if anyone else touched it, it sounded cracked and tinkly. He resumed his work on the Preludes, which his illness had interrupted, started several new compositions, and took relaxation in studying the compositions of Bach, whose works he was engaged in editing. George, he thought, seemed very busy, but she looked happy, and seemed to be enjoying herself. And indeed, she was happy. The astonishing beauty of the country was to her, a true love of nature, a never ending rapture. She could sit for hours gazing out over the wild hill-side, down to the gleaming sea, drinking in deep draughts of satisfaction. She was happy, too about her children ; they were gay and friendly, Maurice's health improved visibly from day to day, and Solange, climbing the hills or the convent ruins, in her little red trousers, enjoyed life too much to be cross or unkind.

George was certainly busy as well. Françoise was unfortunately not strong enough to do all the work of the household, and though Maria Antonia, an occupant of one of the cells, offered to give them any help they required, it was soon discovered that her help was apt

to consist in shaking fleas into the beds, or concocting a meal from poisonous ingredients. George, therefore, always devoted the first hours of the morning to making the beds, and seeing after the day's food, which latter affair was apt to become protracted. When the necessities of sleeping and eating had been provided for she gave Maurice and Solange their lessons, reading Greek History with Maurice, and taking the rules of the participles with Solange. After the duties of the day were over they would generally go out, all three, for an immense ramble over the countryside, returning in the evening tired out and gay. By this time Chopin was generally ready for a little social life. They would sit together, talking, reading aloud, or listening to Chopin's music, until the time came for the others to go to bed, when George Sand took out the novel on which she was working—*Spiridion*.

All went on cheerfully in this way for a few days.

"Mamma," said Maurice at luncheon one morning, "do let us go to the Hermitage to-day."

"What Hermitage?" asked Chopin; and both the children turned to answer him.

"It is a place up on the hill to the north; and five hermits live there—the Sacristan told us about them." (The Sacristan, and the Apothecary, who formerly had belonged to the monastery, were now, with Maria Antonia, its only other inhabitants.)

"And how far off is this Hermitage?" asked George Sand.

"Only three miles," replied Maurice, "do come, Mamma."

"And you, Chopin, *do* come too," said Solange, smiling coquettishly across the table.

"Well," said Chopin, smiling back, "I don't see why I shouldn't—I don't believe it's going to rain."

It certainly did not look like it, and George was delighted at the idea—he was evidently feeling much stronger and better.

And so they all set off joyfully on their walk. The way took them up a winding, stony path, at every turn of which was to be seen a new and striking view of the sea, across a continuous stretch of verdure. George talked eagerly of these beauties, comparing the effect with the Lido, Royant, Marseilles, and declaring vigorously that she had never seen anything like this—nothing half so lovely. But Frederic scarcely responded. The hill was steep, the surface was hard and nubbly, and he was more occupied with longing for the appearance of the Hermitage and the end of the walk than with admiring the beauties of Nature.

At last they reached it, and found four old men digging in a garden, outside an ancient stone hut. George and the children talked to the Superior, went into the hut, and made the hermits an offering, while Chopin sat on a bench outside and tried to recover himself. The sight-seeing of the family lasted, it seemed to him, a very short time, and he was hardly ready to start again when George approached him.

"I don't think we had better wait any longer," she said, looking at him a little anxiously, "rather a disagreeable wind seems to have sprung up, and I think we ought to get back as soon as possible."

The wind certainly was beginning to bluster; but at least, thought Chopin, the road is downhill. They began the descent. At every step the wind howled louder and louder, swirling round and smiting with terrific force from unexpected quarters. Every corner became a menace—an ambush. The exhilaration of the children who dashed on ahead, shouting and laughing, began to irritate Chopin. He tried to tell George that it was not safe for them to rush about like that on a mountain path, but she could not hear what he was trying to say, and the effort to shout brought on an attack of coughing. At that moment a gust whirled round a rock, lifted the unfortunate Chopin almost off his feet, and threw him against the trunk of a

tree. Battered, and gasping for breath, he had given himself up for lost, when George rushed back to him, seized his arm, and pulled him round a corner into a slight lull.

"My dear Frédéric," she said, "you mustn't stop—we must go on quickly."

With her arm in his they certainly made better progress, but in a moment the steepness of the descent began to strain his knees, and his legs began to shake. It was a frightful nightmare. For hours upon hours, as it seemed to him, the dreadful struggle for breath and the tottering march continued, and when at last the shelter of the monastery was reached, he was cold, exhausted, trembling and aching in every limb.

X

THE night was spent in coughing and misery. In the morning George was horrified at his appearance, and so was Maria Antonia. Her report of his condition to the villagers confirmed the bad opinion they had formed of the party, owing to their not attending Mass, and George Sand found her marketing in the neighbourhood more difficult than ever.

Chopin was wretched. He could not sleep, the food was horrible, and sometimes made him sick, his head ached, his throat ached, the slightest exertion was painfully wearisome. Sometimes an agonizing irritability seized him. He felt as if his soul had been flayed—the lightest touch was torture—he even dreaded the thought of it. An impertinence from Solange, a sly insinuation from Maria Antonia, a stupidity from Françoise, an ill-timed joke from Maurice, plunged him into an abyss of depression, or stung him to fury. Fury, he managed to conceal, when the offender was Solange or Maurice; and George

never irritated him. Her bodily presence was so soothing that it relieved him when everything else in the world was painful. Her ministrations were always welcome, and to lie with her cool hand on his forehead was perhaps his greatest approach to tranquillity.

The weather was now more violent than ever. The wind howled up and down the valley, flinging the rain like javelins against the window-panes, and lashing the sea into a turmoil. One evening, Chopin, too tired to occupy himself actively, had been meditating drowsily on the lives of the former inhabitants of the monastery, peopling the half-ruined cloisters with shadowy monks, and wondering, with a shiver or two, if their spirits ever revisited their ancient haunts. With these thoughts he had dropped asleep, to be wakened suddenly by a crash of thunder apparently just overhead. Waking with a terrific start he did not know where he was—his heart beat violently and the sweat stood on his forehead. A cry burst from his lips, and George, horror-struck by the wail that reached her ears, ran to him, to find him ashy white and shaking, his teeth chattering. She caught him in her arms, and held him to her; it was not long before the shaking and the chattering stopped, and she would have laid him back on his pillows, but he clung to her.

Presently he whispered, "Promise."

"What, my poor darling? Anything I can . . ."

"Promise I shall not die except in your arms. . ."

She held him close and pressed her lips to his forehead. "You are not going to die—you shall not die. . ."

"But promise it shall be in your arms. . . ."

"I promise . . . I promise . . . my darling."

And now a new torment was added to his suffering; he began to be seized by nervous fears, to start at imagined terrors and phantoms lurking in dark corners, to dread vague horrors when George was absent. Often she returned to him after a short

absence to find him trembling, with wide staring eyes, and drawn chalky face.

He was getting worse and worse, and George's anxiety became acute. She hardly left him now, except for the necessities of housekeeping or to give her children their lessons. After weeks of watching him daily decline she at last went into Palma and brought out another doctor, shaking her head as she thought of the little good the last medical advice had been. And indeed, this was the worst of all. The patient was to be bled and put on a milk diet, was the verdict ; and Chopin, when he heard it, said, with a faint smile :

“ If I am bled I shall die.”

This too was George's opinion ; and with a sinking heart, as she thought of what it would mean if she was wrong, she took the responsibility of forbidding the operation. Her sufferings of doubt, as she watched him still getting more and more ill every day, and remembered the doctor's affirmation that only bleeding could save his life, were a constant torture. It would indeed have been hard to say, during those long, wearing weeks, who suffered most, the patient or the nurse.

At any rate he was fortunate in having such a nurse. Whatever her anxieties or agitations she never allowed Frederic to see them ; she was always calm, decided, cheerful. She seemed to know, too, by instinct when he needed stimulating, when he would enjoy the merry chatter of the children, or when it would be better to read aloud or to let him doze.

He was hardly ever too ill to play the piano, though there were days when he could not bear its ugly tone. When, after nearly three months of waiting, one of Pleyel's excellent cottage pianos was at last brought into the cell, Chopin was so delighted that George told him he hovered round it like a young mother with her first-born. The next day, seeing he had something to

look forward to, she yielded to the children's entreaties and went out with them for a long day's visit to Palma.

At first, Chopin had been quite content with his new toy, and had tried over many of the new effects he had been elaborating. As the afternoon went on the rain suddenly began to pour down with alarming violence—it was a deluge, made the more devastating by the tempestuous wind, which roared down the valley. Chopin immediately flew into a panic—what would happen to George and the children? On that terrible road up from Palma there would be a torrent—a cataract—they were in serious anger; if they were not drowned in the flood they would lose their way in the darkness and perish of cold on the mountain side.

After a few moments of anxious watching at the window he returned to the piano to distract himself. It was not very successful; he was painfully aware that they ought to have been back long ago, and that the storm was rising in intensity. He played on and suddenly he thought he saw George's white face floating in a great expanse of water, her eyes closed—she was drowned . . . he was drowned too—lying at the bottom of a vast lake—lying dead in a great black cavern, with drops of heavy, icy water falling rhythmically on his heart . . . he heard them—he knew somehow that it was the sound produced by his own fingers . . . or was it all a dream? . . . His cheeks now were wet, he felt water dropping down them. Suddenly Maurice, Solange, George herself were before him, their faces, their hair dripping, George pale with staring eyes . . . with a cry he leapt up and staggered towards them.

“I knew it . . . I knew you were dead!” he exclaimed.

XI

SHE calmed him, restored him to his senses, convinced him that they were all three alive and well ; but the anxiety and the excitement caused by the story of their real adventures left him alarmingly weak. George made a sudden determination ; she would take him away from Majorca the moment the adverse winds allowed the steamer to start for Barcelona. The next few days made Chopin so much worse that she began to be afraid the wind would change too late ; he had begun to show signs of hemorrhage, and she hardly dared to face her own fears. Chopin himself no longer cared what became of him. He allowed George to do what she wished with him, and thought only of bearing his own increasing sufferings, and securing as much of her presence as he could.

The wind at length dropped, and immediately the weather changed. The rain stopped, the sun came out and the heat in the middle of the day was considerable. Everything was ready for the departure ; Chopin, utterly indifferent to what they were doing to him, was made as comfortable as possible in the springless vehicle which was all they could procure. The three hours' descent into Palma was an experience that none of them ever cared to recall. Chopin, shaken violently to and fro on the rough road, soon began to cough painfully ; his throat felt torn and cut, his limbs bruised, his head swimming. At last the fearful jolting stopped. George bent over him anxiously.

"Are you all right ? . . . I will be back in a few moments . . ." and she disappeared.

Why had she left him ? How could she be so cruel ? . . . She had said only a few moments and she had

been gone hours, and he was going to die. A fearful attack of coughing seized him, rending and shaking his whole body. . . . Then he saw George's face again, and he was lifted up and carried away . . . why didn't they leave him alone? . . . Where was she? . . . Ah, she was back once more, and he found himself, almost comfortable, in bed. He smiled, and she smiled back and pressed his hand.

"Now you will feel better," she said, "the French consul is taking us all in for to-night, and to-morrow evening we sail for Barcelona. The sea is quite smooth—I don't think you will mind the crossing a bit. I will go and see about getting you something to drink."

"Don't go away," he whispered anxiously; but the effort to speak was too much for him. Another shattering fit of coughing began . . . he saw the white sheet in front of him spotted with crimson . . . no wonder it hurt so . . . he closed his eyes at last and lay back.

That night and the next day he drowsed with intervals of coughing. In the evening George and Françoise helped him down to the boat. It was a hot night, but the deck was covered with pigs, and the whole party were obliged to go below to the stuffy little cabin. They had hardly entered it when there was a violent thump on the door and the captain put his head in.

"Don't put the sick man in the best bed!" he exclaimed in a raucous voice, "the one he sleeps on will have to be burnt—put him on the one in the corner . . ."

Twelve hours more of purgatory. Except for the heat and lack of air the first hours passed well enough, and they all managed to sleep a little. But towards midnight they were awoken by shouts, bangs and yells from on deck, followed by the shrieks and grunts of the pigs—such a pandemonium had never been heard. It gradually died down; but no sooner had the travellers begun to doze off again than the hubbub

began afresh, and for the rest of the night they had no peace for more than a quarter of an hour at a time. Towards the morning Chopin began to cough again, and again the alarming symptoms of hemorrhage appeared. George determined that she must get a competent French doctor for him at the earliest possible opportunity, and immediately they arrived in port she managed to get a boat sent across to the French man-of-war, *Méléagre*, with a note from her to the captain.

By this time Chopin was hardly conscious of anything but the pain in his throat and chest. He was vaguely aware of being lifted from his bed, of breathing the fresh air, of skilful hands that relieved him of his worst suffering ; then he fell into an exhausted sleep. The worst was over. They reached Marseilles safely in the French steamer, and there remained till the end of May. Chopin recovered very rapidly, but was told he must not dream of going north till the warm weather had really arrived ; and with no wish at all of repeating the agonizing experiences of the past months he resigned himself contentedly to a quiet spring in an agreeable climate with no other companion than George.

XII

THEY spent another happy summer at Nohant, and then returned to Paris. Chopin had given up his old rooms, and after trying, in a half-hearted way, to establish himself a quarter of a mile from George Sand, settled down in a set of rooms in her house, where he could be more or less independent, and at the same time no longer separated from her. Maurice had decided to become a painter, and worked as a pupil with two or three others, in Delacroix' studio. Solange was sent to school, but came home from Saturday to Monday and for the holidays.

Chopin was soon very busy again. His business affairs with his publishers took up a good deal of his time, and in these he was helped untiringly by the faithful Fontana. But Fontana shortly after left Paris for South America, and his place was to a great extent taken by Franchomme. Another, more painful loss among his friends was imminent. Jan Matuszynski was rapidly growing worse and worse and it was plain that he could not live long.

Chopin speedily collected a great number of pupils, old and new. Amongst the most interesting of the new pupils was a child—a little boy of ten years old called Filtsch, who was agreed by everyone to be an amazing prodigy. Chopin delighted in him. The small delicate hands, which yet had such surprising grasp and agility, the short swinging legs, which could not manage the pedals . . . he sometimes felt so much in sympathy with the immature yet passionate striving, that it was almost as if he were teaching himself as a child.

One afternoon Chopin was going out with George Sand, and had told his servant not to let anyone in.

He was just finishing dressing, with all the care which he generally devoted to his toilet, when the man, murmuring an apology, came in with a card. Chopin looked at it. It was engraved: *Wilhelm von Lenz*; and across it was written in pencil, *Laissez passer, Franz Liszt*. The old feeling of animosity towards Liszt had long since died away; certainly he had no wish to renew their friendship, but if Liszt asked anything of him or wished to introduce anyone to him he would do his best to be agreeable. He glanced at his watch, saw that he had half-an-hour to spare and entered the drawing-room.

A young man was standing there, with bright, darting, expectant eyes. He bowed profoundly. Directly Chopin caught sight of him he had a sudden impulse to get rid of him as quickly as he could, so without asking him to sit down he said:

"What can I do for you? Are you a pupil of Liszt's?"

"A pupil—a friend—yes," replied Lenz. "I have come to ask if you will give me your guidance in the study of your mazurkas—I look upon them as a literature in themselves. Some of them I have already studied with Liszt."

"Really!" replied Chopin drawling his words a little, "then may I ask what you want me for?"

The wretched Lenz turned scarlet and looked a fool. Chopin, slightly amused, relented. He looked at his watch.

"Forgive me," he said, "I have an engagement presently, but I find I have still a few moments to spare. Let me hear what you have played with Liszt."

Lenz pulled himself together and went to the piano. Chopin leaned up against it studying Lenz's curious white flat face—he wondered whether he was a complete fool—why Liszt had sent him. Lenz began to run up and down the piano:

"Just to try the *gué!*" he explained. Chopin smiled; no, a fool would not use such an expression.

Lenz played the Mazurka in B flat major with reasonable skill and some comprehension of it. Chopin made up his mind that as Liszt had sent him he would take him. He had only just returned to Paris and had a fair number of vacancies for pupils . . . suddenly his ears were struck by a run where no run should be. He looked up quickly.

"Is that *your* idea? No, I suppose Liszt taught it you—he must meddle with everything . . ." he stopped; he had not meant to say anything against Liszt. . . . "Well! he may do so for he is a great pianist and plays before thousands, while I seldom play to one. . . . Yes, you will do. I will give you two lessons a week—I never give more—and mind you are punctual." Then feeling he had been a little sharp, he added: "And what do you do besides playing? What do you read?"

Lenz looked pleased and well primed.

"My favourite authors are Jean Jacques and George Sand," he replied.

Chopin smiled a little bitterly and his eyes flashed.

"I suppose Liszt taught you that too," he said; and bowed Lenz out.

XIII

JAN died ; and Chopin turned to George as the only one who could soothe if not console him in his sorrow.

They spent a long summer at Nohant, Chopin working chiefly on the F Minor Ballade, George Sand chiefly on *Consuelo*. They had few visitors, the chief of whom were Delacroix in June, and Pauline Viardot and her husband in September. On the whole Chopin was calm and well, except when he was thrown off his balance by the agonies of composing.

"Are you not getting on well?" George asked him, coming into his room one morning, with the cup of chocolate he always drank at ten o'clock.

Chopin was walking up and down with his hair on end, and a gloomy expression on his face. He stared at her vacantly and made no reply.

"Have your chocolate," she said holding it out ; he took it from her and began sipping it, still without speaking, except for a murmured, "Thank you. . . ."

Suddenly he jumped up.

"What am I to do with the wretched thing?" he cried despairingly. "You know that day we walked together towards Montgivray? It all came to me then—the whole of this second development ; it came quite clear and complete. I wrote it down directly I got home, but it's all absolutely different and entirely wrong, and I cannot, cannot get it right."

He pushed towards her a piece of music paper, covered with notes, blots, erasures, corrections.

"But, my dear child, I understand nothing of all that . . . if you would let me hear it I could perhaps judge. . . ."

"Hear it? . . . but hear what? . . . I have written a hundred variants, and they are all wrong. . . ."

"Well, let me hear what you wrote the first time."

He played, breaking off in the middle with a groan.

"It sounds lovely to me—perfectly lovely; but," seeing him shake his head despairingly, "let me hear the latest version now."

Again he played, and again stopped with an expression of disgust.

"Well, I have no doubt that I like the first way best."

He began again, playing the same phrase over and over again, altering an accidental, a stress, a harmony, and looking at her as if to see what impression it made on her.

All at once she stood up.

"The fact is, Frédéric, that you are getting quite confused. You have been shut up in here for five days over that one page, and you simply do not know any more what you are writing. Will you trust to me and do just what I tell you?"

He looked at her a little doubtfully and asked: "What will it be?"

"I want you to take a little holiday. I will try to make it a pleasant one. . . ."

A slow smile came over his face; he took her hand and kissed it.

"You spoil me," he said.

The little holiday was to go with the children and Delacroix, taking a large hamper of provisions, for a long drive to the banks of the Creuse. It took them two days to get there, and Chopin felt very tired, but he slept at night and seemed more cheerful. Lying in the grass in the place she had chosen for their dinner, his head in her lap he looked up at her beautiful face, and the deep blue sky beyond. She, looking down, saw that the clouds had all been blown away.

"Am I not a good doctor?" she asked.

"Very good, George. Do you remember what you promised once at Valdemosa . . . when we thought I was dying?"

"Yes—yes—of course, I remember. . . ."

"Then say it—again."

"I promise that you shall die nowhere but in my arms, my darling. . . . But don't talk like that—you are so well—quite well."

"I really think I am."

And when they got back to Nohant again he found that two simple alterations in his first draft were all that were needed to make the passage what he wanted.

As a matter of fact, it was George who was not well. Her practice of doing all her writing at night had begun to injure her eyes; strong sunlight was apt to cause her severe pain, and she suffered terribly from headaches. She struggled against them, and tried to conceal them from her guests, but there were times when this was impossible. It was then the turn of Chopin to become sick-nurse, and no one could be more devoted, attentive, soft-footed and soft-voiced than he. Nevertheless, George was never quite satisfied to have him attending on her; she only let him stay in her room the shortest possible time, quickly sending him downstairs again to entertain Delacroix.

Delacroix and he understood each other on everything except painting; and as Delacroix did not expect Chopin to understand that it was no real barrier. Delacroix, indeed, was one of the few people with whom Chopin felt he could discuss music, and this was probably because Delacroix always asked him to explain concrete difficulties, and did not embark on the metaphysics of æsthetics.

"I notice," said Delacroix one day, after watching Chopin at the piano for a while, "I notice that you think nothing of putting your thumb on a black note. Now when *I* was taught to play I was told that must never be done. Why did they say that?"

Chopin laughed.

"Yes, I am a fearful heretic; I do all sorts of shocking things. I sometimes pass my thumb under

my little finger, or one finger over another, or strike two consecutive notes with the same finger. All these things would make Kalkbrenner's eyes drop out of his head."

"But explain to me; explain why you do them and the others don't."

"I do them for two reasons. First, I am always trying for a smooth sequence of notes—with an instrument of percussion like a piano, there is great danger of each note standing too much by itself; they must, on the contrary, be threaded together, as it were"—he played a run—"and any fingering—*any* fingering that gives smoothness is to be adopted."

"But why do Kalkbrenner and Co. not see this?"

"Partly because they are fossils and cannot see anything new, partly because they hold incorrect views as to my second point. The orthodox pianist will tell you that every finger should produce the same tone as every other finger—Schumann, you know, ruined himself as a virtuoso, by trying too hard to give the same power to his fourth finger as to the others. Now I say that is all nonsense. Each finger is differently constructed, each finger, therefore, has its own character. It is the duty of the virtuoso, not to make all his fingers alike, but to cultivate the nature of each one to its highest possible extent. Consequently, in a composition, each note, to give it its correct sound, should be struck by one individual finger, and by that one only."

"Good Heavens, Chopin," cried Delacroix, after pondering this for a moment, "but do you mean to say that when you compose you think of which finger is to play each note?"

Chopin laughed again.

"Not exactly," he said; "of course a good deal of it—say in a scale passage—comes right by nature; but when you see a peculiar fingering marked in one of my works, believe me, *I meant it.*"

XIV

LITTLE Filtsch was studying with Chopin the E minor Concerto.

"He plays it well," said Chopin one day to George Sand. "I should like you to hear him."

"Do arrange it," replied George Sand, "he must be really wonderful. Mme Marliani told me the other day that Liszt says of him 'When he starts on his travels I shall shut up shop.'"

Chopin laughed.

"That is a lot for Liszt to say, certainly, but he is right. Filtsch plays much better than I did at his age. . . ."

"You did not have yourself as a master though . . . but when can I hear him play the Concerto?"

A day was appointed, and half a dozen others were invited to form an audience. Amongst these were Lenz, Princess Marcelline Czartoryska, Countess Delphine Potocka, and Miss Jane Stirling, a Scotch lady of wealth and position, who had recently become one of Chopin's pupils. The preparations for the little concert caused him a surprising amount of agitation; chairs had to be put round the walls, the square piano from his study brought in to the drawing-room and put beside the Pleyel grand, and a bowl of violets placed in the middle of the room. The ladies came in silently, curtsying, and taking their places without speaking. Chopin bowed, but shook hands with Princess Marcelline only. When all were seated Chopin signed to Filtsch to take his place at the grand piano, and seating himself at the small one began the *tutti*.

It is probable that the most successful version heard of Chopin's not very successful Concertos was when a pupil played the solo and he himself played the

orchestral accompaniment. Filtsch was certainly his best pupil and the rendering they gave entranced the listeners. Chopin, in the depth of his mind, was transported back to the old, old days at Warsaw where he had composed it. The dreams, the hopes, the aspirations of his youth came upon him in a flood, and when the gentle, murmuring, moonlight arpeggios of the slow movement trembled into the air he seemed to see before him the graceful figure of Constance Gladkowska, in her white dress, with a wreath of roses in her hair, standing as when she sang at his last concert in Warsaw, so many, many years ago. . . .

It was over ; and with an effort Chopin got to his feet while the ladies curtsied themselves out. Filtsch, with white face and trembling limbs, was waiting for some word from his master, but Chopin could not yet speak. Seeing the boy's anxiety he put his hand reassuringly on his shoulder ; when all the ladies except George Sand had gone he said :

"We have now somewhere to go."

George Sand, Filtsch, and Lenz, whom everyone had forgotten, prepared to obey this command. Still without speaking he led them into the street, and to Schlesinger's music shop. He there asked for the score of *Fidelio*, and when it was brought presented it to Filtsch.

"I am in your debt," he said. "You gave me a great deal of pleasure to-day. I wrote that Concerto long ago . . . in happier days . . . you brought them back. Take this great work, my dear little friend, and study it as long as you live ; and remember me too, sometimes . . ." Chopin's voice was trembling ; Filtsch burst into tears and kissed his hand. Chopin sighed deeply, and disappeared into the street.

The next morning was the day for Lenz's music lesson. There had been a reaction after the emotions of the day before, and Lenz was not very gently handled. Chopin had begun by crying—

"Easily—easily"—and had fidgeted a good deal, shaking his head and growling.

Suddenly the door opened and Meyerbeer's face looked in through the open door.

"May I come in?" he asked; and Chopin replied, a little coldly, but with his usual politeness:

"By all means—I am just giving a lesson . . ."

Meyerbeer entered and sat down and Chopin turned to Lenz.

"Now play the B Minor Mazurka," he said; and Lenz played it.

"Very interesting," said Meyerbeer. "You call that a Mazurka . . . of course it's really in two-four time . . ."

"What do you mean?" asked Chopin quickly, flushing a little.

"Yes," said Meyerbeer, "I don't know if it's an effect of syncopation or what, but that's the time—two beats in the bar. . . ."

"Play it again," said Chopin biting his lips and looking neither at Lenz nor Meyerbeer; he took up the pencil on the piano and beat time with it.

"Yes," said Meyerbeer calmly, "two-four time."

"Three-four——" said Chopin, so loud and with such flashing eyes that Lenz was alarmed.

"Well," said Meyerbeer still quite placidly, "if the Africans in my new opera may have it for a ballet, you'll see they will have to dance to it in two-time."

The blood rushed into Chopin's face; he pushed Lenz off the piano stool and sat on it himself.

"I say it is *three* time," he almost shouted, and began to play and count—"one, two, *three*, one two, *three*," with increasing vehemence.

Meyerbeer shook his head.

"You will see it must be *two* time, because . . ."

But Chopin was not there to hear the reason. The door gave a loud slam, and Lenz and Meyerbeer, left alone in the room, stared at each other with open mouths.

XV

THE winters were spent in Paris and the summers at Nohant. Chopin often protested that he was not made for a country life, but it is probable that the rest from constant evening parties after long hours of teaching was good for his health ; certainly it afforded him leisure for composing.

In 1844 his father died, and Chopin felt his loss very severely. Indeed, he was so depressed and homesick that George urged him to invite Louise and her husband to pay him a visit. At first he thought this absurd—impossible—but having been persuaded to make the suggestion he was surprised and enraptured by his sister immediately falling in with his wish. She and Kalasanty came for a month, and most of the time was spent at Nohant. Frederic was quite cheered up by seeing her again after so long an absence ; Mme Sand was charmed by her, and so, indeed, was everyone in the house. The only drawback to the visit was the inevitable one of parting at the end ; but when this wrench was over Chopin felt for the time at any rate restored in health and courage.

Maurice and Solange were now becoming more and more important members of the household. Maurice, at twenty, the apple of his mother's eye, and the *man* of the establishment, was a person to be reckoned with. Chopin, with no sort of jealousy himself, and with the strongest theoretical ideas as to the relations between mother and son, had nevertheless felt once or twice that Maurice and he were in each other's way. Maurice was, Chopin thought, not satisfied with his position in the family ; but this feeling of hostility was rare and brief—it generally seemed to arise in connection with a quarrel with Solange.

Solange, though only fifteen, was a masterful young woman. Both her resemblance and unlikeness to her mother were sources of friction between them, but probably the most usual cause of revolt in Solange was her mother's very obvious preference for Maurice. Solange was jealous and hot-tempered, and the occurrence of painful scenes was only too frequent. And when Solange was in a rage with Maurice, who was openly supported by their mother, what was more natural than that Solange, looking wildly round for someone to take her side, should try to drag Chopin into the fray as an ally of hers?

Chopin's idea of good manners necessarily opposed his taking any part in a family quarrel; it also prevented him from presuming in the very least on his private relations with George, when they met in front of others. Certainly he would never have dreamt of criticizing her treatment of her own daughter. At the same time Solange was pretty and astute, and could when she chose be exceedingly attractive; and Chopin was often persuaded, in his heart of hearts, in spite of George's plaintive confidences, that Solange was in the right, and that she was, very unfairly, sacrificed to Maurice.

"Maurice," said Solange one day at lunch, "you haven't forgotten you are going to walk over to Aunt Emily's with me to-day, have you?" (Aunt Emily was Hippolyte Chatiron's wife and lived at Montgivray, three miles off.)

"I don't know what you mean by forgetting—I never said I'd go at all."

"You did, Maurice!" fiercely. "You promised last week—didn't he, Chopin?"

"Well, it doesn't matter," broke in Maurice before Chopin could speak, "perhaps I did say something about it, but I can't go to-day."

Solange's face went scarlet and their mother looked up.

"If it is because of taking me into La Chatre, it doesn't matter a bit, Maurice. I can easily go alone."

"Certainly not, Mamma. I *want* to go with you. Why can't Sol go to Montgivray alone?"

"Because," burst out Solange, "because I want to fetch the kitten Aunt Emily promised me, and I'm not going to carry it all the way back by myself—besides, I hate going to Montgivray alone—you know I do—and anyhow you promised."

"I didn't promise to go to-day—why won't to-morrow do instead?"

"To-morrow!" Solange was really angry now. "As if you didn't know perfectly well that Aunt Emily said if I didn't come by Wednesday she'd give the kitten to Fanchon. You know quite well—you heard Uncle Hippolyte give the message as clearly as I did."

"My dear Maurice, go with her," said George quietly to her son. "I don't at all mind going to La Chatre by myself—I had much rather you went with your sister."

Solange tossed her head.

"Thank you! If you think I'd go with him now you're mistaken—I don't want to walk with people who come out of charity!"

"Really, Solange," said her mother, "I think you are unreasonable."

"Of course you do! You always think I'm in the wrong and Maurice perfect—but I thought people were supposed to keep their promises!"

Luckily the meal was now ended. Maurice and George went into the drawing-room, Solange flounced out into the hall, slamming the door, and Chopin went out through the drawing-room on to the terrace. Presently, with the idea of leaving George and her son together, he went out to the lawn, and in a moment felt a light hand on his arm. He looked up; Solange was beside him, her large black eyes full of tears.

"Now, Chipette," she said caressingly. "You were there when Uncle Hippolyte came over about the kitten—didn't Maurice promise to take me to fetch it?"

"Yes, certainly he did," said Chopin, uneasily.

"Then don't you think he's a beast to say he won't?"

"But I think he would go, Sol, if . . ."

"Yes, now that Mamma says 'I had much rather you went with your sister.' He'll do it for *her* sake—not mine—do you think I'll endure that?"

Chopin had nothing to say, and looked at the grass. Solange sighed.

"Nobody cares about me—Mamma and Maurice are always going out together, but they don't want me—not really—nobody wants me. . . ."

She sighed again and looked up at him through her long lashes.

This fish was very easily hooked.

"Dear Sol, I want you—let *me* go to Montgivray with you—I would have suggested it before only it's rather a long way."

Sol's tears and sighs immediately vanished; she beamed at him, radiant.

"Darling Chipette! How perfectly angelic you are! I'll go and put on my walking things at once!" and she rushed indoors.

Chopin, rather regretting his offer as he thought of the long, hot walk, moved slowly towards the house; on the terrace George came out to meet him.

"Has she persuaded *you* to go with her?" she asked, a little anxiously. "I do hope not—it is much too far for you. . . ."

"She did not persuade me—I offered—I really think I can manage it."

George sighed.

"If only she were a little more considerate—dear Maurice would have gone in a moment if she had asked

him more amiably—I don't know what to do with her. . . .”

But Chopin did not want to discuss Solange with her mother; he mumbled something inarticulate about dressing, and turned away. George went to Maurice, who was knocking about the balls in the billiard-room.

“Oh, Bouli,” she said sadly, “what do you think? She has got round Chopin, and induced *him* to take her to Montgivray. It's much too far for him, and he's certain to come back coughing; but if I say a word to her she'll probably fly into a passion. . . .”

Maurice shrugged his shoulders.

“Very likely. As for Chopin, if he's foolish enough to encourage Solange when she's so disagreeable, and so rude to you . . .”

But Maurice's sentence was unfinished. All the dogs about the place began barking, iron-shod feet began stamping on the stone vestibule, the front door banged with a shattering crash, and a raucous voice was heard shouting—roaring:

“Hullo! Hullo! Aurore! Solange! Maurice! Where are you all! Aurore! I say! Aurore! Aurore!”

“Your uncle!”

George rushed out into the hall to welcome him, and try to mitigate the noise, but it was not easy.

“Ah, Aurore! There you are! Now, where's Solange? I've brought her something from her Aunt—where is she? Sol—ange!”

It was impossible for anyone to pretend they did not know when Hippolyte was in the house. Chopin fled as far as he could from the centre of disturbance and shut every door and window between it and him. Maurice reluctantly came out of the billiard-room to do the polite. Solange took off her hat and came slowly down the big stone staircase. Directly Hippolyte saw her he gave a great roar like a bull in pain,

thrust his hand into one of his big pockets and pulled out a tiny tortoise-shell kitten.

"Oh!" screamed Solange, forgetting her anger and everything else as she flew down the remaining stairs. "Oh! what a darling! Mamma, Maurice, have you ever seen such a little pet? Oh, Uncle Hippolyte, thank you a thousand times for bringing it over, and tell Aunt Emily she is an angel!"

XVI

GEORGE SAND had been very busy in helping to launch a local newspaper of advanced views, to be called *L'Eclaireur de l'Indre*. After a great number of more or less acrimonious debates, it had been agreed that she herself should not be one of the directors, but should contribute articles to it. She also found for them an editor, a young journalist of the name of Victor Borie, to whom she speedily became excessively attached.

During all these negotiations Chopin felt as if he were at a distance. He did not take much real interest in politics, but all his instincts and tastes were anti-democratic, and in his most charitable moments he looked upon George Sand's theories as fantastic Quixotism. He disliked Borie the first time he saw him, and though he was as polite as possible, his dislike did not diminish. George on her part never attempted to influence Chopin's ideas in politics or religion. Her opinions, her thoughts, many of her feelings, indeed, would, she knew, awaken no response in him, and she was content it should be so. The bond between them was strong and serious, but it did not depend on similarity of opinions or on her confiding her sorrows to him.

At the Square d'Orléans, the Paris residence of

George Sand, Chopin and their common friend, Mme Marliani, one of the most frequent visitors was Augustine Brault, a girl of about eighteen, a cousin of George Sand. She was young, beautiful, gentle and calm—a pleasing contrast to the other girl inhabitant of the house, as more than one member of the establishment noticed.

Just before the time for migrating to Nohant, George Sand told Chopin that it had been arranged for Augustine to live permanently with her. M. and Mme Brault were, she said, each in their different way, rather objectionable people; it would be better for Augustine to be away from them—"and besides," she added, looking with meaning at Chopin, "Maurice is very anxious for her to come."

Chopin supposed that a match was to be made between the young people; he was fond of Augustine, and thought the idea a good one.

"And who else will be coming this year?" he asked.

"I don't know," she said, with perhaps deliberate vagueness. "Pauline Viardot, certainly, and Louis, perhaps. . . . Oh yes, and I have asked Borie. . . ."

"Oh . . ." said Chopin; and after a pause, "Anyone else? . . . Delacroix?"

"I asked him, but he thinks he won't be able to come this summer . . ." and the conversation dropped.

The summer was an excessively wet one. Most of the crops were spoiled, and floods made travelling a difficulty. Chopin found the damp weather extremely trying, and began to cough more than before; he developed indeed the habit of being attacked every morning by a violent fit of coughing, which left him weak and exhausted for an hour or so afterwards. It was unfortunate—he had seemed so much better, except for the cold he suffered from each winter—but it was to be hoped that next summer would be more clement, and would improve his health.

The uncertainty of the weather prevented the usual excursions and picnics, and the inhabitants of the house being thus forcibly kept indoors had fewer occupations than usual, and were perhaps more inclined to watch each other's behaviour.

"What inseparables Maurice and Augustine are!" said Solange one morning to Chopin, as she brought him his cup of chocolate. "I suppose they think they are in love!"

"Really?" replied Chopin, in a slightly ironical voice. "Why, what an observant girl you are, Sol!"

Solange tossed her head.

"I daresay I observe more than some people think!" and she gave a disagreeable little laugh. But Chopin thought it wiser not to pursue this topic.

"What is Pierre so busy for with a ladder over there?" he asked hastily. "I've been so much interested in watching him that I've done no work at all, and yet I can't make out what he's doing."

"Don't you know? Augustine said the ash tree spoiled the view, and Maurice persuaded Mamma to have it cut down."

"Oh yes, I remember, . . . but didn't your mother say it had been frost-bitten, and must come down?"

"Oh, I daresay she'd find some excuse for doing it—but it was really Augustine's idea. . . . Don't you think, Chipette, that Mamma would be jealous of Augustine if she hadn't Borie to play with?"

Chopin shook Solange's hand off his arm and made no reply; the expression on his face would have daunted most people, but Solange was only amused. She laughed and went on with her malicious remarks.

"She has been closeted with him the whole morning, Chipette! . . . Chipette, aren't *you* jealous of Borie?"

"My dear Solange," said Chopin with such icy coldness that she stopped laughing, "it is, of course,

perfectly natural that Mme Sand should have a great many matters to discuss with Borie. . . . I see nothing remotely amusing about it." And even Solange felt that the conversation was now closed.

He put Borie firmly out of his head, but perhaps for that very reason his thoughts circled more round Maurice and Augustine than they would otherwise have done. They seemed so very much in love, George was apparently so content, so maternal, that he could not understand why it was not announced that they were to be married. Of course it was no business of his—he never said a word on the subject to George—but he could not avoid a feeling of uneasiness, and a distrust of Maurice.

However this might be, there seemed more occasions of friction than formerly. One of the subjects of contention was Chopin's Polish servant, Jean, whose strange speech and stranger habits alternately amused and enraged the whole French household.

They were summoned to lunch one day by a bell ringing which lasted for a quarter of an hour. When Suzanne and Jean had left the dining-room, George Sand said with a laugh :

"What a passion Jean has for that dinner bell ! He rings it longer and longer every day."

"Well, to-day it really was absurd," said Solange. "Does he think he's supposed to go on till we're all in the dining-room ?"

"Perhaps it's his way of showing his musical proclivities," suggested Borie, with a sidelong glance at Chopin.

"Whatever it is I can't endure it any more," said George Sand, "and I've told him if he rings too long again I shall pour a jug of cold water on him."

Even Chopin could not help joining in the general laugh, though he felt he ought to be standing up more for his Jean.

"It's a pity he doesn't get on better with Suzanne,"

put in Augustine. "Poor Suzanne says the names he calls her are simply terrible."

"Well, I believe Suzanne knows how to defend herself," replied Chopin. "She told me herself she took a knife to reason with him the other day."

George Sand shook her head disapprovingly.

"It's a great pity they quarrel so—Suzanne is such a good maid—it's most unfortunate she doesn't get on with him better."

At that moment George was called away to speak to one of the farm men, but the conversation went on.

"The fact is, Chopin," said Maurice, rather more pointedly, perhaps, than he would have spoken in his mother's presence, "the fact is he's rather cross and disagreeable. The other day Augustine asked him to carry some wood into the meadow for a bonfire we wanted to make, and he was most unpleasant about it."

"I suppose he was busy with some other work," said Chopin quietly.

"I don't see why that should make him rude to Augustine!" exclaimed Maurice, his temper rising.

Chopin turned to Augustine, who had said nothing, and was looking rather white; he spoke with ostensible politeness.

"Another time, when Mademoiselle has commands for my servant if she will make them through me I shall certainly see that they are executed." Gently as he spoke, Chopin could not refrain from slightly emphasizing "*my* servant," and Maurice's face darkened.

"Please don't speak as if Mlle Brault had committed an indiscretion," he said fiercely. "If there was an indiscretion it was mine, for I confess that I suggested it, having no idea that there was any harm in such a simple matter. However, we shall know better in future."

XVII

THE next summer the same party assembled at Nohant, with the addition of a young man called Lambert, a co-pupil of Maurice's in Delacroix' studio. He seemed an inoffensive creature, very fond of Maurice, and rather awe-struck at finding himself a guest of the famous Mme Sand. For a couple of weeks Countess Lorka Czosnowska was one of the party; she was an old pupil of Chopin's, and it was at his request that she had been invited.

Chopin had found that for the sake of peace he must dismiss Jean. He disliked changing his servants, and he disliked dismissing a Pole, but it was obvious that Jean made himself too disagreeable to the rest of the household, and he had to vanish. Two other domestic changes were made that summer; the old gardener, Pierre, and Chopin's friend, Françoise, both of whom had been servants at Nohant in the days of old Mme Dupin, George Sand's grandmother, were dismissed—owing, Chopin at first supposed to their age. . . . His ideas on the subject were destined to be changed.

Solange, who had now attained the mature age of seventeen, had had a brilliant idea of how to annoy her mother. Her old, instinctive habit of making an ally of Chopin could be developed—developed indefinitely. It is true she had discovered that it was no use to abuse her mother to Chopin, but abusing Maurice was for her purposes almost as good, for it would come to much the same in the end, and Chopin would swallow nearly anything of that sort that she offered him. Besides these pleasing excursions in mischief-making, she threw in a good deal of flirtation, and though Chopin never became anything more than

friendly, she was perfectly aware that she frequently caused her mother a twinge of something very near to jealousy.

Chopin had hardly arrived at Nohant before Solange whispered to him that all sorts of strange intrigues were in the air; and primed in this way, Chopin soon detected the fact that the atmosphere was full of mysteries. Maurice and Augustine, Augustine and Lambert, Augustine and Borie, Borie and—but no; in that direction he kept his eyes shut. But what was going on among the young people? Obviously a great deal that was not very pleasant. Probably Chopin by himself would have turned away his thoughts from Maurice's affairs as well; but that did not suit Solange at all. She coaxed Chopin out for a drive with her and poured out a string of somewhat unsavoury confidences

Augustine was Maurice's mistress; but he had no intention of marrying her. This was the kernel of Solange's story, and Chopin was obliged to agree that it was probably true. As for Lambert and Borie, Solange's theory was that Maurice hoped the people in the neighbourhood would think Augustine had something on hand with Lambert, while Solange and the servants were to be convinced it was Borie. In this way, whatever happened he would avoid all responsibility, and could in no eventuality be brought to book.

After this delightful drive Chopin's mind was in a whirl. It all sounded plausible—he felt uneasily that Solange was too shrewd to be mistaken about such things. Only, it left so much still unexplained. What was George's position in all this? Did she know what was going on? . . . Did she approve? . . . Or was she simply too weak to oppose Maurice? . . . Then Augustine and Borie. . . . Certainly he had thought they were a great deal together—very intimate—was it possible that Maurice was merely using Borie

as a screen for his own intrigue? Or—the thought suddenly flashed upon him before he had time to reject it—was it in reality Borie who was using Augustine as a screen for an intrigue with . . . ?

But the idea had only occurred because it had come too quickly for him to refuse it. He was quite, quite determined not to pursue such thoughts—not to harbour them for a moment. George, whenever they were together, was affectionate, soothing, cheerful, the old refuge from anxiety and irritation, the shelter that made life supportable, and without whom, he was convinced with sudden certainty, he should inevitably die.

It was perhaps true that they were not as much together as formerly. George was very busy with political and journalistic work, and since she had suffered so much from her eyes she had been obliged to devote the morning instead of the night to writing her novels, and was in consequence almost overwhelmed. This was Chopin's healthy explanation of the fact that she was with him less and less; when he felt ill he told himself that no one could bear to be with an invalid all day, that his cough was painful and irritating to hear, that he was a burden to his friends, and that it was only natural they should be getting tired of him. . . . But he turned instinctively from analysing his own and other people's feelings, he hated searching for motives, probing into secret, concealed meanings, and though easily depressed, he was, unless very ill, easily made cheerful again.

One morning George came into his room, and put her arm round his shoulders.

"Are you busy?" she asked. "I want to tell you something that I think—I'm sure—will interest you. . . ."

He moved a chair and some papers to make her comfortable and waited.

"It is about Solange," continued George. "I have

had a letter from M. des Préaulx asking if his son Fernand may pay her his addresses. . . . He has written a most charming letter. . . . I have asked Solange about it, and I think she is rather pleased, so we may expect to see a good deal of the young man. . . . What do you think of it ? ”

Chopin remembered Fernand des Préaulx quite well ; he had thought him a handsome, attractive young fellow, and he told George at once that he was delighted and hoped something would come of it. It was only afterwards, on thinking over the conversation, that it struck him that George had been watching him curiously all the time.

XVIII

GEORGE SAND was writing *Lucrezia Floriani*. Since she had taken to devoting the morning to her novels she found herself more open to interruptions than formerly ; it was very difficult to keep the time free from other calls, and she missed, besides, the absolute stillness of the midnight hours. She had, however, from long practice, the power of forcing herself to turn out a regular number of words every day whatever happened around her—interruptions and disturbances that were merely physical were, after all, but insignificant hindrances.

She was not at all secretive about her work, and would often read a chapter aloud in the evening to her guests. The manuscript lay open on the desk in her room, and generally, when Chopin went in to see her, he would pick it up, and read the last day's work. He hardly ever made any comment on what she wrote ; a smile, or a “ How clever you are ! ” were his highest compliments, and he never criticized.

This summer there were not many visitors, and those

who did come were mostly old friends who fell easily into the ways of the household. The exception was Countess Lorka Czosnowska, Chopin's pupil, and a fashionable beauty from Warsaw. She was not altogether a success. The fashions of Warsaw seemed supremely ridiculous to the inhabitants of the Château, and so did her unconcealed, exaggerated adoration of Chopin. Augustine took a dislike to her, and Maurice, of course, followed suit. They managed to behave politely while she was in the house, but no sooner had she taken her departure than their pent-up mockery broke out.

"Thank goodness no more fashionable ladies this summer!" exclaimed Maurice as she drove away. He, Augustine and Chopin had been seeing her into her carriage and were standing together at the front door.

"But is it really fashionable to tie up your sleeves with green velvet ribbon?" asked Augustine with a snigger.

"Oh yes, and to lisp," replied Maurice, "and to turn out your elbows and your heels as you walk . . . and to worship M. Chopin. . . ."

Chopin, who was fond of Lorka, was becoming annoyed. He was determined, however, not to intervene, and turned to go back to his room. But just as he passed Maurice the latter broke into a roar of laughter and cried out:

"Come now, confess, Chopin; what did she do to you this morning in the drawing-room? Did she kiss you? Your cheeks looked very red when you came out! That was it no doubt, Augustine! A good smacking kiss on each cheek!"

Chopin stopped dead and spoke in a low voice:

"Please don't go on speaking like that."

Maurice raised his eyebrows.

"*Like that!* But, my dear Chopin, must I really talk in a way that pleases you?"

"I don't mind how impertinently or coarsely you talk as a rule," replied Chopin, still speaking quietly, but with concentrated bitterness, "but I do insist on your speaking respectfully of my friends in my presence."

Augustine began hushing Maurice, Chopin continued on his way to his room, and no more was heard of Countess Lorka.

Though these passages between Maurice and Chopin generally took place when George Sand was not there this was not always the case, and she inevitably became aware of the tension between them. Her efforts to keep the peace had unfortunately a certain tendency to do more harm than good, for her attempts to soothe Chopin embittered Maurice's jealousy, while her attempts to control Maurice made him, Chopin thought, more offensive in her absence.

Another cause of anxiety for her was Solange's health. There was apparently no definite illness—the doctors could find no organic trouble—she only became terribly depressed and very easily fatigued. The exertion of reading one page of a book was too much for her, the slightest effort would bring on a flood of tears from sheer weakness. It was what would now be called "a nervous breakdown," and her mother at last decided that she wanted a change. An excursion was arranged—a kind of driving tour to different parts of Berry; the tour was to last three weeks, and for part of the time Fernand des Préaulx was to join them.

"You will come, won't you, Chopin?" said George Sand. "I am sure it will be good for you, too. . . ."

"You must excuse me," said Chopin, "I don't think I can come. These excursions tire me too much—they really do me more harm than good."

"But we shall be travelling so slowly on account of Solange—I am sure you won't find it too much this time."

But Chopin was determined not to go, and was merely finding excuses.

"I can't leave my 'cello sonata—I am just in the thick of it, and I must go on. It will be an opportunity while the house is quiet."

"You know it always does you good to come away in the middle of your compositions—you return to them refreshed, and with a clear mind—don't you remember the F minor Ballade?"

"I can't leave it." Her insistence was beginning to irritate him; he had never felt like that before with her, but then she had never so persisted.

"But you will be all alone——" She stopped suddenly and looked at him. There was an expression on his face that she had seen sometimes before he burst into a passion—surely, surely, he would not speak to her as he sometimes spoke to Maurice. . . . He was intensely white, almost livid, choking; she put her hand on his arm and spoke very quietly.

"You shall do just as you like; don't be angry with me."

The colour rushed back into his cheeks in a flood; he took her hand from his arm and kissed it very tenderly.

"Forgive me," he said, and found he could say no more.

So the expedition went off without him. Much as he loved society he felt it a relief when Augustine, Maurice and Borie were carried off, and his work progressed the better for his immunity from daily pin-pricks. The party returned, on their side, cheerful yet glad to be at home. Solange was quite recovered, and her formal engagement to Fernand des Préaulx was officially announced. Chopin, directly he heard of it, went to look for her, and with sincere emotion told her how much he liked Fernand, how glad he was to hear they were to be married, and how much he hoped for their true happiness.

But with her restored health there had returned to Solange her old devil.

"Thank you, Chipette," she said. "Everyone seems to think one must marry, and that when one is married one will be happy. Do you really think the two things go together?"

"Very often," said Chopin, feeling rather chilled by her emphatic cynicism.

"Well, I don't know. One hears of married people who are *not* happy—like Papa and Mamma—and of people who are happy and not married—like——" She looked up at him and paused mischievously, finishing with a laugh, "like Maurice and Augustine."

"Well, Solange, I don't know that it's our business to interfere with their arrangements—let them be happy in their own way."

"Oh, certainly, so long as 'their way' is not to spoil the happiness of others. That little cat, Augustine, with her meek face and her sweet words—much she cares what she does if she gets her own way—poor old Pierre, poor old Françoise—after years of service here—never mind, *she* doesn't like them, and off they go! . . ."

"What do you mean, Solange? It's impossible. . . . I always thought it was because they were too old. . . ."

"I suppose Mamma told you that! No. Maurice made her do it, because Augustine didn't like them. I should advise the new gardener, and the new maid, and . . . and *everyone* who wants to stay here to keep in with my cousin, that's all!"

She looked at him with eyes full of meaning and ran off.

Chopin shuddered. It never occurred to him to doubt the exact truth of what she said, or to suspect that she might have a motive for her insinuations. It all fell in too exactly with his own suspicions . . . it bore, he thought, the stamp of truth. His feelings

towards Maurice became more those of moral disapproval than of personal resentment ; it was not long before this dawned upon Maurice, who told himself, with a burst of passion, that he would not put up with *that*.

One morning George came into Chopin's room, and sat down. She sat for a long time without speaking ; Chopin thought she looked ill, and after some hesitation was about to ask her if he could do anything for her, when she broke silence.

"Frédéric," she said, slowly and heavily, as if speaking was an immense difficulty, "Frédéric, I have been talking to Maurice."

He was surprised—alarmed ; he said nothing but waited.

"He has been telling me," she went on, still dragging the words out, "what indeed I have noticed myself—that for some time he has found it increasingly difficult to get on with you. You have spoken to him in a way that has wounded him terribly—not once or twice, but, he says, constantly, and he can bear it no longer."

She stopped, and gasped ; the effort was agonizing. Chopin sat looking at her, his face turned to marble, his eyes glittering.

"God," he was thinking, "this is it—it has come." He did not speak and she began again.

"He said . . . he said . . ." how could she say the words ? "he said he could not bear it, and that I must choose between him and you . . ."

Chopin spoke at last, but so faintly that he was almost inaudible.

"And . . . which one ? . . ."

A spasm crossed her face ; it broke into animation—the animation of anger.

"Do you know me so little ? Do you think *anything* would make me give up Maurice ?"

Chopin was silent. His head dropped and he began to tremble. At last he spoke.

"Then—you don't love me any more. . . ."

"You say I don't love you! How can you speak such a blasphemy! You know, you must know that I love you tenderly—I have loved you dearly all these years—but does that mean I must sacrifice Maurice to you? Be just to me, Frédéric, and don't accuse me of ceasing to love you because I still love my son."

While she was speaking a kind of despair was taking possession of Chopin; but as he felt it seize him he was aware that in some strange way it brought vigour and determination with it. He raised his head and spoke firmly.

"No; of course not. But that is not all. George, you do *not* love me as you used to . . . you have so often refused . . . I have been afraid . . . I have wondered why. . . . Oh, the reason is simple and clear—you are getting tired of me. . . ."

She burst into tears and caught him in her arms.

"No, Frédéric, no! . . . It's not true. . . . I love you. . . . I love you. . . . You know you are not strong—I should have killed you. . . . I swear that I love you—deeply—fondly. . . ."

Her words were carried away in sobs, and he held her gently and stroked her head.

"Don't cry . . . don't cry. . . . Poor George . . . never mind . . . never mind, my darling." With inarticulate words of endearment and caresses he tried to soothe her, and she recovered her self-control quickly and completely. For a long time they stood without speaking; then George took his hand, and without looking at him said hurriedly:

"Then you will be careful to avoid quarrelling with Maurice, and we shall be happy again. . . ."

AGE 36-37. XIX

THE impossibility of feeling as before became more and more obvious to Chopin every day. He loved her as much—perhaps even more than in the past, but the sense of repose, of security had vanished for ever. He returned to Paris and spent three months alone, writing to George constantly, in the old terms of affection and respect, and dreading . . . always dreading . . . he knew not what. His fear of Maurice's jealousy was the one he most openly acknowledged to himself—alas, he never thought of guarding himself from the hand that in the end struck the fatal, treacherous blow.

On the first of January Franchomme came to see him, with New Year wishes. He found him looking depressed and ill, and on his murmuring something about happiness in 1847 Chopin shook his head.

"Thank you," he said, "but it is no use; some fearful catastrophe is certain to come to me in this year."

"What do you mean?" asked Franchomme, surprised.

"You will think me a fool," said Chopin, smiling faintly, "but it is the number seven which is fatal to me. All the great misfortunes of my life have happened in the years that ended with that number. . . . In '27 it was my sister Emily's death, in '37 . . . I lost a dear friend—I don't think you knew about her—in '47 . . . I shall probably die. . . ."

"Come, come," cried Franchomme, "don't be so gloomy; you don't look a bit like dying—you must keep that for 1877! . . . What a good thing it is you weren't born in the seventeen hundreds—you would have had a calamity every year of your life!"

Chopin smiled ; but he knew too well that the calamity, this year, would come.

In February the Sands returned to Paris. Chopin immediately felt, on seeing her again after those lonely months, the old relief from struggling, the old sensation of being in a place of refuge, only—it was now accompanied by a terrible uneasiness, a fear of being thrust out from the sanctuary.

His tenderness, his attentions, his devotion to her were if possible more delicate, more exquisite than before. It was as if he wished, not to ingratiate himself with her, but to convince her of his regret, his love, his admiration. And she on her side was more solicitous of his well-being, more maternal than ever . . . yet he sometimes thought that she was profoundly agitated, and showed a calm surface only by a violent act of will.

He made several special efforts, in spite of a growing feeling of reluctance to taking much exertion, to give her pleasure or to amuse her. He arranged with Franchomme to play the violoncello sonata to Countess Delphine Potocka, the only other guests being the Duke and Duchess of Wurtemberg and Mme Sand. He took her to the Quartet concerts organized by Franchomme and Alard, and to the Exhibition at the Salon. She was always pleased to be with him, and these days passed without a shadow or a breeze.

One day she found in *La Presse* an enthusiastic account of his playing the E Minor Concerto at Mme de Courbonne's, with Mlle O'Meara, a little pupil of his, about thirteen years old. Chopin, seeing George's interest, asked her if she would not like to come over to his rooms the next day, when he would be giving her a lesson, and George eagerly agreed to the suggestion.

Mlle O'Meara, the next day, thought her master was very restless and a little inattentive—his mind was evidently fixed on something else. Presently the door

opened, and a lady entered whom Chopin received, she thought, with especial grace and amiability. Chopin indeed was delighted to have pleased her by his invitation, and delighted to have his morning of lessons diversified by a visit from her. He brought her a chair ; and as she was sitting down he noticed a patch of dirt on her coat. On anyone else it would simply have disgusted him ; on her it was different. He immediately began to rub off the mud, with no consideration for what in other circumstances would have revolted him, the fact that he was dirtying his own white hands. As he raised his head from the work he saw the little girl at the piano looking at him out of the corner of her eye ; he seemed to see on her face the thought, " How he loves that woman ! " and with a deep blush he turned away.

During the winter Mme Sand had made a new acquaintance. A sculptor, of the name of Clésinger, wrote to her to ask permission to call the head of a woman which he was exhibiting *Consuelo*. This led to his coming to see her, and to her visiting his studio ; and in the end it was arranged that he should do the busts both of her and Solange.

Chopin from the first could not bear Clésinger. The sculptor had all the faults he most disliked ; he was noisy, self-assertive, prepared to do anything that would push himself, and afflicted with the very worst taste. He had besides a not very good reputation, and though Chopin felt it was not much use protesting against the acquaintance, he did throw out a few cautious hints. George Sand, he thought, did not take them amiss. Though her taste was very far from being as sensitive as his, she was too sensible and had seen too much of the world not to be a fairly good judge of human nature ; she half agreed with his strictures, and he gathered that once the busts were finished Clésinger would not be so frequent a visitor at the Square d'Orléans.

The busts, however, must be done first. After George Sand's came the one of Solange, and the sculptor seemed to find considerable difficulty in getting this to his satisfaction. The sittings were prolonged—every day Solange spent hours at the studio, and it was only at the beginning of April that the portrait was declared to be finished. By this time the des Préaulx family had arrived in Paris, for in a day or two Solange's marriage contract was to be signed, and after that the marriage itself would not be long delayed.

On the evening before the official signing George Sand appeared at Chopin's rooms ; he saw in a moment that something had gone wrong.

"Need you ask what it is?" she cried, in answer to his anxious question. "Of course it is Solange—when has she ever done anything but grieve and disappoint me!"

"But what? . . . How? . . ." he asked.

"She refuses—now—at the eleventh hour to sign the marriage contract. Why, I have no idea. She simply says she has changed her mind, and, of course, the more I say the more determined she becomes!"

Chopin's consternation was great. He had thought so highly of Fernand des Préaulx—the marriage had promised so well for Solange's happiness—and, for the matter of that, for George's, too—that this sudden rupture was a severe disappointment.

"It is so insulting to his family," continued George miserably, "to bring them all up to Paris, wait till the very day before—and then, without the faintest reason or excuse, calmly announce 'I have changed my mind'!"

"Yes, it is unfortunate ; the poor young man—I am very, very sorry for him—he will be unhappy about it ; but after all, George, it is better to find out that it was a mistake before the marriage than after."

"No doubt. I should like to be sure that it *was*

a mistake, and not a deliberate plot from the first to be vexatious to me. Imagine the figure I shall cut to-morrow when I have to tell these poor people that everything is at an end. Solange, needless to say, is gloating over the thought of my embarrassment."

He tried to persuade her that this was impossible—absurd. She would not argue with him; she got up abruptly and said:

"We shall have to go down to Nohant immediately; this will mean various alterations in my money arrangements, and my will, and I shall have to see my lawyer. It is inconvenient having to leave Paris at so short notice, but of course that is nothing to the other disastrous results of her selfishness and obstinacy."

XX

THE unhappy George travelled down to Nohant in a miserable state of mind. She had had an exceedingly painful quarter of an hour with the des Préaulx—the old father coldly dignified and courteous, Fernand wretched and looking ill, and she had been made to feel, in the politest way in the world, that her behaviour had been cruel, insulting and ill-conditioned. Solange had remained throughout perfectly indifferent; now, something more than indifference was beginning to appear—a sort of wild triumph, a gleeful expectation. George's heart sank more and more; she knew this was not the end, and dared hardly speculate as to what direction her daughter's malevolence would take next.

They had not been many days at Nohant, George had hardly done more than go in to La Chatre and arrange an interview with her lawyer, when one morning crossing the village square, she thought she saw a

familiar figure. Immediately a suspicion of the truth flashed upon her.

"Solange," she said at lunch, "is Clésinger in the village? I thought I saw him there this morning."

"Did you?" replied Solange, smiling maliciously. "I daresay; I know he's coming to see you as soon as he can."

"About what?" asked her mother; but she knew the answer before it came.

"My marriage settlement, of course. We are going to be married."

George did not know whether it was a blow or a relief. It was very painful to find that for weeks Solange had been secretly making use of her sittings to arrive at an underhand agreement with Clésinger. It wounded her pride—though no other sentiment—to find that Solange and not herself had been the object of the sculptor's attentions. But on the other hand, if Solange really meant it this time it was reassuring to discover that her doubts in another direction had been needless.

It was soon clear that Solange *did* mean it. She was evidently very much in love, and so was Clésinger. George was perfectly convinced that he was quite an unsuitable match, that he was disagreeable, selfish and extravagant, but she saw plainly enough that they were determined to marry, and that straightforward opposition would be worse than useless. Her only hope lay in temporizing. Some time must inevitably be spent in discussing money matters—it might be possible—there seemed just a chance—that by means of continual delays the marriage might be postponed till the capricious Solange again changed her mind.

George wrote to Chopin telling him vaguely that Clésinger was asking for Solange's hand, and immediately received a letter which horribly increased her agitation.

He was very much upset by the idea—he was

grieved—he was angry. He protested in a way that seemed to George disproportionate, unless he had some hidden reason for it. The violence of his opposition irritated her, and made her more favourable to Clésinger than she had been for days. She decided, with a warmth that might have seemed on *her* side exaggerated, that Chopin had better be told nothing more about what was happening—his interference in the affairs of her household was always disastrous—and when she wrote to Maurice she urged him, rather unnecessarily, to say nothing on the subject to Chopin. She even went so far, with a greater cruelty than she perhaps realized, to stop writing to him herself, at any rate until something definite was settled.

The young people were getting impatient, and active steps had to be taken. George Sand wrote to M. des Préaulx to tell him that her daughter was engaged ; she sent Clésinger to Nérac to obtain the formal consent of M. Dudevant. When he returned a violent reaction set in on George's side, and she again adopted methods of procrastination. Solange was not pleased, and walked about the house with the black face her mother knew so well, but as yet there was no explosion, and George hoped faintly that the crisis might yet be tided over.

One morning, in a casual letter from an acquaintance in Paris she read the following lines that struck upon her heart like a dagger : “ I was indeed grieved to hear how ill M. Chopin had been. We all hope that you have better news of him, and that he is now out of danger.” Danger . . . to Chopin . . . was it true ? It seemed only too likely. But what was she to do ? . . . Was it possible for her, as things were, to leave Nohant ? How could she even find out what was the true state of affairs ? To whom should she write ? She decided at last on Princess Marcelline Czartoryska, and dashing off a frenzied enquiry, she sent it by a special messenger to catch the post at Chateauroux.

All the rest of the day she was like a ghost, and in her preoccupation did not notice that significant looks and nods were passing between the lovers. . . .

That night she could not sleep ; she did not even undress, for the restlessness of acute anxiety was upon her and drove her up and down in her own room for a long time. Suddenly she thought the fresh air would do her good, and throwing a shawl over her head she went out into the garden. Not noticing where she was going she wandered towards the little grove of trees at the bottom of the garden, and stepped on to the small path that led to a side gate opening on the main road between La Chatre and Chateauroux. What was her astonishment to see, waiting by the gate, a carriage, with the figure of a man standing at the open door. She recognized him instantly as Clésinger, and in a moment more realized that he must be waiting for Solange.

Her heart sank like lead, and for a moment her legs trembled so much that she had to hold on to a tree. But it was clearly the moment for action, and at these moments she had never yet failed. She turned softly away, and once out of hearing almost ran back into the house and up the stairs. . . . As she reached Solange's bedroom the door opened and Solange came out fully equipped for a long journey.

When she saw her mother she laughed.

" Well," she said, " I told Clésinger you would notice something was up, but he said you were as blind as a toad ! "

Without speaking George drew Solange back into her bedroom, shut the door and sat down. Then she spoke, panting a little for breath, but calmly :

" Perhaps you would tell me what is the meaning of all this ? "

" The meaning ? " Solange laughed again, bitterly.

" Well, we both saw plainly enough that you were trying to put obstacles in the way of our marrying,

so Clésinger suggested our going off together. He said that after that you would probably want to hurry the marriage on."

"And you agreed?"

"I thought it was an excellent idea."

"Good God, Solange . . . don't you understand what you are doing? Don't you realize what sort of man you are entrusting with your reputation . . . your happiness?"

"Oh come, Mamma, it is no use your being sentimental over me. Reputation, did you say? Do you expect me to believe that *you* lay any stress on that?"

"Solange," said George so gravely that there was no bitterness in her voice, "when you have exhausted the pleasure of insulting your mother, you will perhaps be able to realize that I am speaking quite unselfishly, for your own good. I cannot see how it can benefit you to live unmarried with this man, when it is only a question of weeks—days—before you will be legally his wife. Will you tell me what you will gain by it?"

Solange made no answer, but shrugged her shoulders.

"Very well," continued George, "then let us end this foolish escapade. Take off your things. I will go and tell Clésinger that you are not coming."

Seeing that Solange had yielded she turned wearily to the door again. Down the dark stairs she stumbled, out into the garden, back to the side gate, hardly knowing what she was doing, till she came face to face with Clésinger. He gave an oath and started back.

"I come from Solange," she said firmly, "to tell you that she has changed her mind and will not come out to-night."

He stared at her angrily and then sneered.

"Changed her mind, has she? She may change it back again though, if we're kept waiting much longer—just you remember that. . . ."

And as George watched him drive away down the road she knew it was true and that she was defeated.

AGE 37. XXI

ONE thing at any rate was made plain by the events of the night. It was quite impossible for George to leave Nohant; she must rely for news of Chopin on others, and trust to others to nurse him. She wrote immediately to Maurice telling him to come at once to Nohant, with or without his father. She faced Solange and Clésinger with a calm face, but sinking heart, trying to be pleased at the attitude of friendliness they adopted, though all the time aware they were simply intent on screwing up the amount of money she was settling on Solange. When at last, after days of misery, she heard from Princess Marcelline, her worst anxieties were relieved. Chopin *had* been ill, very ill; but he was now better, and quite out of danger. The Princess wrote in a very friendly way. She assured Mme Sand that Chopin was being well nursed, and taken care of, and promised to let her know how things went on.

The most pressing business now became to hurry on the marriage. In less than a fortnight the ceremony took place, George writing to her friends that she was pleased with the match, and that Solange and all the family were happy. Poor George! though she could write in this vein to Mme Marliani and Delacroix even to them her own "happiness" seemed rather a figure of speech. To Chopin she could not write in such a strain, nor could she bring herself to explain the real truth as to her reluctant, impotent, yielding to the desires of Solange and Clésinger. Her letters therefore became vague and almost formal; Chopin's convalescence was not assisted by this painful correspondence.

After a short wedding tour, M. and Mme Clésinger returned to Nohant. Maurice was already there for the summer, and the Clésingers had hardly been in the house a day before George was convinced that their visit could not end without an explosion. Clésinger, she had long known, was recklessly extravagant. It now appeared that he looked upon his mother-in-law as a milch-cow whose chief duty was to supply him with money, and who must consequently be prevented from spending what she had on pauperizing the villagers, spreading pernicious political doctrines, or even on her own pleasures. Maurice of course was to him merely a rival for the inheritance, who was to be outwitted, or if that was impossible, driven from the field by violence.

George implored Maurice not to give any grounds of anger to his sister or her husband, and he consented to do his best the more willingly because he was convinced that to bring the precious pair to ruin it was only necessary to provide them with enough rope. But with persons of their temper and lack of self-control, a calm and reasonable opposition to their sometimes insolent demands was as exasperating and inflammatory as anger and sharp words.

It soon became apparent that Clésinger's rapacity had a definite cause. He was horribly in debt, one of his creditors was pressing him uncomfortably for payment, and he finally made Solange ask Mme Sand for a loan of 8,000 francs.

She found it difficult to conceal her surprise and displeasure ; at last she replied with an effort :

" I will see what my position is, and consider the matter ; but I tell you frankly, Solange, and you had better tell your husband, that I think it is extremely unlikely that I shall manage it."

" Why on earth not ? You can easily afford 8,000 francs—after all it's only a loan, and Clésinger needs it badly."

"You know nothing whatever about my affairs, and what I can and cannot afford—and as for calling it 'only a loan' of course that is nothing but a form of speech, and between us might as well be dropped."

"Well, look at your papers *now*, and see whether you can manage it. This annoying man is making a great fuss, and we want to be able to stop his mouth at once."

"No, Solange, I cannot make any decision in such a hurry. I want to think about it—in any case there is no post out before to-morrow morning and I will let you know by then. But I really advise you not to raise your hopes."

Solange went off, tossing her head and muttering that thinking about it only meant consulting Maurice, and of course everyone knew what *that* would produce.

In these surmises she was quite right. George went immediately to Maurice, who very strongly advised her to refuse at once and definitely.

"They have not the smallest claims upon you," he said decidedly; "you made considerable sacrifices at the time of the marriage, which after all was less than two months ago, and if you begin this sort of thing there will be no end to it. You may be quite sure this request is simply a feeler, and if you give in to it you will have no peace—they are determined to suck you dry."

This was more or less George's own opinion. She had really only consulted Maurice in order to secure his moral support; armed with this support, she sought out Solange, and told her that she found she must quite definitely refuse the loan. Beyond a venomous look Solange made no reply. Clésinger was apparently not in the house, and George had a faint hope that after all nothing very terrible would come of her refusal.

The rest of the day passed off quietly with Clésinger

still absent, and Solange silent. The old village priest came to dinner, and they all went afterwards to a big shed in the yard at the back of the house, where Maurice kept his pictures. They were standing round the canvases, criticizing and discussing, when the familiar noise heralding the advent of Hippolyte was heard. George, thinking the noise unusually loud even for Hippolyte, went to the door of the shed, and saw that besides her brother, Solange and Clésinger were in the court-yard. All their faces were red; it was obvious that the gentlemen had been drinking, and that Hippolyte was quite tipsy. Clésinger, whether drunk or sober, was evidently in a dangerous mood. Catching sight of George he walked towards the shed followed by Hippolyte and Solange.

"Hullo, Mme Dudevant," he called out, in such a coarse, insolent tone that the priest looked up surprised, and the blood rushed to Maurice's cheeks. "So you're taking refuge in here, are you, behind your precious Maurice, because you don't dare to face me alone!"

"Maurice," said George quickly in an undertone, "for heaven's sake don't answer him—he doesn't know what he's saying—you can see he's been drinking . . ."

"Oh no," cried Solange, with a laugh, "it's the protection of M. le Curé she's looking for . . . how has *Maurice* ever protected her against anything? . . . Why he's frightened of me!"

"Take your husband out of here at once," said Maurice, darkly, but Clésinger broke in:

"I shall not go till I have been told by Mme Dudevant herself why she has refused me this little loan—I am entitled to be given a reason for her stingy behaviour and I demand one."

"Don't answer him, Mamma," cried Maurice, springing forward, "I will give him his reason. My mother has acted on my advice. If you choose to talk

to me about it quietly to-morrow, I will explain why I so advised her."

"Surely there's no need for a quiet explanation to-morrow, Maurice," put in Solange, with her irritating laugh, "I should think it was clear to everyone that eight thousand francs less for us is eight thousand francs more for you."

Maurice turned furiously towards his sister, but before he had time to speak Clésinger snatched up a hammer leaning against the wall and would have given Maurice a violent blow on the head with it if George had not sprung between them. In her effort to save her son she struck Clésinger on the face, and Clésinger, mad with rage, hit her with his fist so that she staggered backwards. She hardly knew what was happening when an exclamation of horror from the priest, a servant who had rushed up, and the sobered Hippolyte, made her turn towards Maurice. He was white and smiling grimly; in his hand was a pistol which he was slowly lifting up, the aim turning against the man who had hit his mother.

"Stop, Maurice . . . stop him . . ." she whispered, and as in a dream, standing herself, unable to move hand or foot, saw people rush in, push Clésinger away, snatch the pistol from her son's hand. . . . Her agitation was so great that she hardly realized how the scene ended. The Clésingers at last disappeared, and she clung to Maurice, trembling, her teeth chattering. He soothed and quieted her, and persuaded her to go indoors and lie down, though it was vain to hope for sleep or real rest.

The next day the Clésingers, perceiving themselves that their position at Nohant was untenable, prepared to depart, and Solange sent up an impertinent message to her mother asking for the loan of Chopin's carriage to take her to Vierzon on the way to Paris. This George peremptorily refused, and Solange and her husband drove off towards La Chatre in a hired

vehicle. When they had once disappeared George completely broke down. She lay in a stupor, apparently unconscious of what was going on around her, and when, two days later, a note arrived from Chopin asking her to let Solange have the use of his carriage, she gave it to Maurice without speaking, and seeming not to realize its meaning. Gradually, however, she began to return to life ; and it slowly dawned upon her that but for this formal note no letters from Chopin had arrived. She waited, desolate, longing, and at last afraid . . . he must be ill again ; and in spite of the deluges of rain, in spite of her lassitude and throbbing head, she prepared to hurry to Paris. Just as she was getting into the post-chaise the letter in Chopin's handwriting arrived—she tore it open ; and realized that she was too late.

XXII

No sooner had the Clésingers left Nohant than Solange had begun to ponder on the last perfidy that yet remained for her to work against her mother. She did not know how far Chopin had been kept informed as to the doings at Nohant, but knowing her mother as she did she suspected shrewdly that a good deal had been concealed from him. She was convinced that it would be well worth while to give her own account of the quarrel ; if by a lucky chance she could persuade him to take her side, to believe that George was in the wrong, *and to tell her so*, she knew her revenge on her mother would be complete.

Her husband took no interest in these machinations. He was quite frankly out for money, and if he was certain he would not get that, beyond an impulsive outbreak at the moment he would take no more trouble

about it—the pleasures of deceiving, of separating two people who loved each other, were refinements beyond his rough nature. Nevertheless, he was not without a part which Solange destined him to play in her little drama. Chopin did not like him; perhaps he could be made jealous of him.

Her first step was accordingly to persuade Chopin to lend her the carriage her mother had refused. She wrote him a deplorable letter from La Chatre, declaring that she was too ill to travel in any other way, and informing him vaguely that the scenes at Nohant had been terrible. She begged him to stay in Paris till she arrived for she wanted above all things to see him.

As she had expected Chopin answered immediately by a formal note to Mme Sand asking her to let Mme Clésinger have the use of his carriage. The note was sent off to Nohant, and it was not long before the carriage appeared outside the inn. The Clésingers were ready to start; they set off immediately for Vierzon where they could take the train for Paris.

They reached Paris towards midday, and that same afternoon Solange went to the Square d'Orléans. She was tired after the long journey, and pale, with large black rings under her eyes. When Chopin saw her he started up, his face white, and drawn with alarm.

"Dearest Solange, how glad I am to see you . . . but what has happened? What is all this about my carriage? What happened at Nohant? What is wrong? . . . What has happened to your mother?"

"You need not be anxious," she answered in a voice which she could not prevent from being bitter, "*she is well enough.*"

"What is it then? Something terrible has happened, it is plain . . . oh, don't keep me in such suspense . . ."

"You need not be anxious," she said again, "nothing

has happened except that Maurice has made my mother turn us out of the house."

"Is it possible? Oh, my dear Sol, do tell me all about it. I can't imagine how such a thing can have happened."

"Can't you? It's so simple. You know she has always hated me, and since I married Clésinger it has been worse than ever. Maurice has always had everything his own way and when he found that Clésinger would not bear to see me slighted he determined to get me out of the house. . . . He has succeeded, that's all."

Chopin hung his head. He heard as if in a trance George's voice speaking to him:

"He said that I must choose between him and you. . . . Do you think anything would make me give up Maurice?"

What could seem more likely than that the choice had again been made, this time between Maurice and Solange? How could he guess the lengths to which Solange and her husband had gone, the provocation they had given, the horrible violence of that last scene? Yet even that must be hinted at, lest the first account coming from her mother should give an undesirable impression.

"The end of it all was rather dreadful, Chipette. . . . Poor Clésinger, who is very hard pressed just now by some wretched money-lender, ventured to ask my mother to let him have a temporary loan to help him out of his difficulties. Maurice, wanting the money himself most likely, pretended to take it into his head that my husband was being rude and threatening, so he produced a pistol, if you please, and would have fired it at Clésinger's head if we hadn't all rushed in and disarmed him. After that, of course, I dragged Clésinger off to Paris, and we left Mamma in hysterics in Maurice's arms, swearing that we were neither of us to darken her doors again."

Chopin groaned. He thought Clésinger probably *had* been rude and threatening, but that Maurice should try to shoot his sister's husband under her eyes, and that his mother should encourage him, should side with him against her daughter, seemed only the injustice of one who is wilfully blind.

"The fact is," Solange continued sadly, "she has been furious with me ever since I married Clésinger—though heaven knows she was fond enough of him before he declared himself . . . Chipette, jealousy is a terrible thing. . . ."

Chopin turned away abruptly to the window and walked across the room and back before he spoke.

"My poor child, you don't know what you're saying . . . it's not surprising after all you've been through. . . . But you're wrong in thinking your mother hates you . . . quite wrong. At bottom she loves you very much, and I am sure that in time you will both forgive each other for everything."

"I think she might," declared Solange in an outburst of candour, "if she were left to herself . . . but while Maurice is there—while he cannot bear to have my own husband take my part, she is continually being poisoned against me."

Again the impossibility of answering; again the painful feeling of being a fellow victim. . . .

"Well," said Solange, putting up her handkerchief to her dry eyes and pulling down her veil, "I cannot tell you how much your sympathy is to me—without that, I should feel so alone—so deserted—I know you will always be kind—I can always trust you. . . ." And with a brave effort she smiled wearily up at him, and went away.

For several days Chopin did nothing but mourn with Solange. He could not bear to begin on the miserable subject with George, and day after day hoped that something would come from her side that he could refute or remonstrate with. At last Solange suggested

that a word from him might bring George to a sense of her cruelty and injustice, and the unfortunate Chopin agreeing with a groan, sat down to his ill-inspired task.

What did he say? What could he say but the things which had been whispered to him so adroitly? That to turn Solange and her husband out of the house was vindictive and unfair, that to refuse them money openly at the instance of Maurice, was neither right nor wise, that if Clésinger were a boor it had after all been George who had brought him into the house in opposition to her best friend's advice, and she had only turned upon him when he had married Solange . . . every word of his well-meant rebukes was vitriol to the already suffering George, and the remarks about Clésinger convinced her that Solange's calumnies had stopped at nothing.

Chopin did not have to wait long for an answer. George's heart was by this time overcharged, and she must pour herself out to someone. The thought of Solange and Chopin—Chopin and Solange—Solange confiding in Chopin, Chopin consoling Solange, the two coming together to speak and think evil of her, was more than she could endure, and she emptied her jealousy, indignation and misery into a furious letter to him. Imbedded in the tears, recriminations, and rhetoric there was a solid ultimatum. If Chopin continued to see the Clésingers, George had done with him for ever.

XXIII

CHOPIN never hesitated for a moment as to his choice. George seemed to him to be treating her daughter unkindly—even cruelly—Solange had appealed to him for help ; she had no one else to turn to. It was impossible for him to desert her in this terrible moment, be the cost what it might ; and if it meant the end with George, that price, too, should be paid.

At first he bore up better than he himself could have thought possible. His pride, his certainty that George was behaving badly to Solange, his resentment at her outburst to him, his relief that the whole thing was settled, that there would be no more scenes with Maurice, no more fear of her vexation, no more feverish attempts to bolster up an impossible situation—all this gave him a certain courage, a high-spiritedness that carried him through the first months of desertion. He flung himself into as much society and teaching as his health would allow, faced his old friends who had also been her friends, with determination, and, perhaps with some pleasure and relief, entered with them into interminable discussions on the situation, past and present.

With everyone, however, even with his own family, he confined himself to speaking of George's behaviour to the Clésingers. He protested at her having agreed to the marriage and then immediately turned against Clésinger. If, he said, a mistake had been made, George made it as much as Solange, and it was most unfair of the mother to rend the daughter for what had been in reality a common error. The fact that Solange had forced her mother's hand by her attempted elopement remained to the end unknown to him ; it

was concealed from him by both Solange and George—by George for the sake of the daughter who was her greatest misfortune.

As for his own intimate dealings with George he would say nothing. There were not lacking amongst their common friends people eager to enjoy and to widen the rift between them—people who wanted to know what Chopin thought of George Sand's portrait of him in *Lucrezia Floriani*, who told him what bad taste it was of her to have described their relations in a novel, who could only suppose that she was treating him as she had treated Jules Sandeau and Alfred de Musset when she got tired of *them*. To these charitable remarks he made no reply ; and if one or two of the poisoned darts stuck he never let the marksman have the pleasure of perceiving it.

Through the summer and early autumn the people he saw most were the Clésingers. Solange persuaded him that he had been mistaken in disliking her husband, and Chopin, whose affection for Solange had increased many times since the sacrifice he had made for her, would soon have swallowed anything in order to remain an intimate of her house. The Clésingers were on their part very glad of his friendship and countenance. Their financial straits were increasingly painful, and Chopin, though not rich, had not many claims upon him, and could hardly have been more eagerly generous.

He did not confine his generosity to money matters. He was constantly urging Solange to take the first steps towards a reconciliation with her mother, and in the end she went down to Berry. She stayed at La Chatre with Duvernet, an old friend of George's, and went twice to see her mother at Nohant. She wrote to Chopin that her mother's attitude towards her was extremely cold, but that she had said that she could write to her, and had added that so long as Clésinger did not come too, Nohant would always be

open to Solange. From La Chatre she went on to her father in Gascony ; she was expecting a baby towards the end of February, and had decided that Paris, cold, and peopled with dunning creditors, would be an unsuitable locality for her confinement.

Gradually the excitement which had upheld Chopin at the beginning of the quarrel died down and the painful reaction set in. He felt miserably the lack of the material comfort, the small attentions, the unceasing care with which, for eight years, he had been surrounded. More terrible was the want of a listener always interested and sympathetic—the ache of a new loneliness seemed sometimes to hurt physically. Wherever he turned he was beset with recollections—there was not a chair in his sitting-room, not a book on his shelves, not a habit of his life that was not associated with her. So too, and more painfully, she seemed interwoven with his music ; and when he resolutely determined to bring forth something new in which she should have no part at all, his heart felt dry and cold, his mind empty—nothing was there.

When the misery of his loss and the wounds of memory became unendurable he fled for relief to the circle of his acquaintances most removed from association with George Sand. This circle was a little group of British ladies, wealthy, musical and his ardent admirers, who were always pressing him to come to London. Mrs. Sartoris, formerly Adelaide Kemble and a professional singer, Mrs. Erskine, the rich wife of a rich Scottish gentleman, and her sister Miss Jane Stirling, one of Chopin's pupils, were amongst those with whom he often took refuge ; and he found in Mrs. Sartoris' voice, and the amiable platitudes of the Scottish sisters, an atmosphere mercifully unlike any other to be found in Paris.

Chopin's friends were naturally anxious and perplexed about his condition. They thought he talked too much about George Sand, and tried to change the

subject when he spoke of her ; they tried to take care of his health and succeeded only partially ; and at last they decided that it would be good for his purse, his interests and his spirits to give a public concert. He consented. The day was fixed, the Court bought forty tickets, Pleyel, in whose rooms the concert was to be, covered the stairs and platform with flowers, but a few days before the concert was to be given Chopin was seized with illness. Nevertheless when the day arrived he dragged himself out of his rooms, and played—played divinely—a Trio by Mozart, the Barcarolle, the Berceuse, Nocturnes, Etudes, Preludes, Mazurkas, Waltzes, the 'cello Sonata. . . . Then, while the audience gushed, raved and applauded, called him Ariel, the dream pianist, the sylph of music, while they summoned him back to be clapped and give encores, he crept down to the green-room and fainted.

XXIV

A WEEK after the concert Louis-Philippe fled from Paris, the monarchy fell and the second Republic was proclaimed. The excitement in Paris, the shooting, barricades and general uproar left Chopin almost unmoved. He disliked the idea of a republic, and at first was afraid of disorders in the streets and annoyances from "the People." But quietness and order were soon restored ; a much more interesting event was the birth of Solange's daughter. She sent him a pencil note to say that though she had suffered a great deal all was well now, and Chopin's thoughts were very much taken up with considering whether this would not improve the relations between George and her daughter.

The day after he received this news he went with a friend of the name of Combes to call on Mme Marliani

in order to discuss with her the possibilities of the situation. He found her, however, surrounded by other visitors—it was impossible to have any confidential conversation—and the only thing of interest that he heard was that Mme Sand had hurried up to Paris to take part in the revolution, and was staying in a hotel near Maurice.

The thought that she was in Paris agitated him. He wanted to go home to adjust his ideas and emotions, and after a very short visit he signed to Combes to come away and they took their departure. As they opened the door of the flat to go out Chopin found himself face to face with George Sand, coming with Lambert to call on Mme Marliani.

His mind was so full of her that it was hardly a surprise ; but the suddenness of her appearance made his heart beat quickly—while his breath came and went in jerks. He thought violently that he must keep calm, that he must not let her see what he was feeling, and in the voice—as he told himself—in which one greets a stranger, he said :

“ Bonjour, Madame.”

She answered as calmly and distantly, and in the seconds this had taken he had resolved on what he was to do.

“ Forgive me for asking, but is it long since you have had news of Mme Clésinger ? ” he asked.

She looked somewhat surprised, but answered immediately.

“ The last time I heard was a week ago.”

“ You heard nothing yesterday ? . . . the day before yesterday ? . . . ”

“ No.”

“ Then I must inform you that you are a grandmother ; Solange has a little girl, and I am very glad to be the first to tell you the news.”

Hastily bowing he hurried down the stairs followed by the startled Combes. But having reached the

ground floor he realized that he had said nothing about the health of either mother or child . . . how stupid . . . she would be anxious . . . she must be told. Climbing the stairs again was however out of the question ; he turned to Combes :

" Dear Combes," he panted, " would you be kind enough to go back and tell Mme Sand that Mme Clésinger and the baby are both well ? . . . It was idiotic of me to forget to say so. . . ."

" Certainly," replied Combes, and disappeared.

Chopin leant up against the wall in a tumult of thought. She looked exactly as she had done the last time he saw her . . . she had not smiled . . . she had been calm—grave—beautiful. He shut his eyes, but hearing steps opened them again and saw Combes, and beside him George.

" Solange is well ? " she asked with a touch of eagerness, " have you heard any details ? "

" I have had a pencil note from her, in her own handwriting written the day after the birth of the child. She said she had suffered a great deal, but the sight of the little girl made her forget it all."

A smile broke slowly over George's face, and then faded again.

" Was her husband with her at the time ? "

" I imagine so, for the letter looked as if it was addressed in his handwriting."

There was a pause, and George took a step towards him.

" How are you, Frédéric ? " she said in a low voice, " you have been ill . . . are you better now ? "

Her physical nearness increased his agitation so much that he was conscious only of the necessity of leaving her.

" I am very well," he replied hurriedly ; and turning to the hall porter, " please open the door."

George came nearer still and without speaking held out her hand. He took it. His own was icy cold and

trembling and he could not look at her. The door was open, and bowing hastily he passed out without another word. Combes took his arm and led him back to the Square d'Orléans. He hardly noticed it, he hardly noticed that Combes had left him, his mind was full of George—her face, her voice, her smile, the touch of her hand; he repeated over and over again in his thoughts that brief interview, and presently the passionate desire came over him to recount it all to someone else—in that way he would almost re-live the scene, almost experience again her presence, her contact. But it was impossible, the episode had been too pointless to tell a third person—and then suddenly he thought of Solange—to her the tale would be full of interest and meaning.

He quickly sat down and wrote a letter to her. It was hardly more than a minute account of every detail that had occurred; the elaborate chronicle was just what he wanted to give an outlet to his feelings. He folded and sealed the letter, and then rose with a sigh of relief, and sat down at the piano . . . he played a few notes—suddenly put down his head on the desk of the piano and began to sob.

EXILE

Bare, ruin'd choirs where late the sweet birds sang.—SHAKESPEARE.

CHAPTER V

EXILE

I

SOLANGE's baby only lived a few days. The agitations in Paris attendant on the Revolution, the painfulness of his associations in the Square d'Orléans, his increasing illness, sleeplessness and weakness, made Chopin resolve that for some time at any rate he must leave Paris. He accepted the invitation of his Scotch women, and arranged to spend the summer at least in London.

Miss Stirling, enchanted at having persuaded him to come, was determined to make him comfortable. She took rooms for him, sent him her own Pleyel, and saw the Erard and Broadwood properly delivered, arranged for his meals, not forgetting his ten o'clock cup of chocolate, supplied him with note-paper stamped with his own monogram. She was almost surprised herself at the pleasure she took in satisfying his wants ; Chopin was sometimes delighted by getting just what he had needed, sometimes astonished at the delicacy of her attentions and the trouble they must have taken her, sometimes irritated or bored by her perpetual visits. Bored or delighted, he felt there was in any case no escape from her—she was too determined, he was too indifferent for them to part.

He was hardly established in London before he was surrounded by high Society. The Duchess of Sutherland invited him to Stafford House, where he played

before the Queen and the Prince Consort; Marchionesses, Countesses, and legions of Ladies called upon him, and asked him to visit them. At Mrs. Grote's house he met Members of Parliament and made friends with Jenny Lind, that year making her *début* at Her Majesty's Theatre. Mrs. Sartoris and Lord Falmouth lent him their drawing-room for concerts; wherever he went he was received with enthusiastic praise alike from ladies of fashion and connoisseurs of music.

But he was ill and unhappy. He was too weak to climb stairs; his playing had become so delicate, so faint, that except in a small room it was almost inaudible; he gave his lessons lying on a sofa; he practically abandoned composing for which he had no strength. Except when his Scotch women bored him into a fit of irritation he hardly attended to what was going on around him. He thought, longing miserably or in bitter resentment, of his lost George, or, more and more often now, of his home so far away. His mother, Louise, Isabella, Titus, the streets of Warsaw, the fields and woods of Szafarnia, were constantly in his mind. In long waking dreams he wandered through the gardens and wild places of his boyhood, or sat beside his mother resting his head upon her knee and listening to her while she played and sang the dances and songs of Poland.

When the season was over in London Miss Stirling and her sister persuaded Chopin to go to Scotland to the house of Lord Torphichen, their brother-in-law. There, and with a Polish Doctor Lyschinski in Edinburgh he spent the summer and the autumn. He went to Glasgow and Manchester as well as Edinburgh to give concerts, but it was only with great physical difficulty that he dragged himself on these journeys. He was still mentally indifferent to where he went. "It does not matter," he said, "where I go to cough and suffocate"; but at last the cold winds and mists of the North made the coughing and suffocating so bad

that he was obliged to return to London. Once there he was immediately forced to go to bed with a severe cold in the head, but in spite of this he promised to play for a Polish charity at the Guildhall, and persuaded his doctor to make him capable of it.

This Polish charity was an annual occasion. A Ball and Concert were given at the Guildhall, the ball-room was magnificently decorated, splendid refreshments were provided, the nobility, even Royalty were amongst its patrons. This year it was to take place on the 16th of November, and on a cold damp winter night Chopin left his bed and drove off to the Guildhall. The concert was to be held in a room a little way from the ball-room ; many of the dancers had no idea that there was a concert at all, or where it was ; those who did find their way to it were hot from dancing, and more inclined to use it as a sitting-out room than to attend to the music. They barely interrupted their whispers while Chopin played two Etudes which they could hardly hear, and then rushed back to their dancing. One or two of his friends were shocked and pained at such behaviour, and, knowing his dread of public playing and his sensitiveness to lack of appreciation, were much afraid he had been severely wounded. They might have spared their fears. Chopin hardly noticed the audience ; all his attention was concentrated on the effort to go through his task without collapsing. Immediately he had finished he went home to bed, and through the long sleepless night, while his head ached and his cough tore and shook him, his mind kept dwelling on the first concert at which he had ever played—the concert which, like this one, had been for a charity, and at which the public had admired his lace collar . . .

He now began to long for Paris again—after all, Franchomme, and Gutmann, and Grzymala were there . . . and Solange . . . and he was accustomed to the ways of Paris, and the fogs of London were

becoming unendurable. But the new year came before he could move. Then, when at last he was in a state to travel, he found a Pole, Niedzwiecki, who was also going to Paris and was glad to be able to help him on the journey. Grzymala prepared his rooms for him, not forgetting, at Chopin's special request, to put violets in both sitting-room and bedroom, and toward the end of January the crossing was made.

As the travellers left Boulogne, Chopin, who had been looking out of the windows of the train, spoke to his companion.

"Do you see the cattle in that meadow, Niedzwiecki?" he said. "*Ça a plus d'intelligence que les Anglais.*"

II

It was certainly a relief to be back in Paris again. Franchomme, Grzymala, Gutmann, were constantly with him, and it was pleasant to see their friendly faces—even the familiarity of the rooms and furniture was a comfort. Yet the fatigues of the journey and the cold weather made him so ill that his doctor called in a well-known consultant, M. Simon, to see if anything could be done. It seemed as if there was nothing; they recommended care and rest, and Chopin thought with a sigh that it would not be long before he found rest without help from the doctors.

He did not stay in bed, but hardly managed to do more than drag himself from his bedroom to his sitting-room, and back again. Teaching and composing were alike impossible, and the days became tediously long and painfully wearisome. His only distractions were visitors; Delacroix came to see him frequently, many of his pupils came to play to him, Countess Delphina Potocka sang to him, Princess Mar-

celline Czartoryska made sure he was being properly nursed. In the spring Miss Stirling and Mrs. Erskine came over to Paris, and were as assiduous as ever in their attentions.

One day Gutmann ventured to make a joke on Miss Stirling's constant visits.

"Yes," said Chopin with a smile, "in London they said I was going to marry her—poor lady, they might as well marry her to Death!"

"Don't say that," cried Gutmann, horrified. "It is only this dreadful weather—in the summer you'll be all right again. . . ."

Chopin shook his head and smiled.

"Well . . . perhaps . . ." he said, "but in any case it's clear I can't marry, for I and my wife should not have enough money for food and lodging—we should have nothing to eat. . . ."

"That wouldn't be an obstacle in the case of Miss Stirling—*she* has plenty, they say."

"Rich women want to marry rich men, my dear Gutmann, and at any rate not cripples but handsome youths. Besides, I am not thinking of a wife, but rather of my home in Warsaw . . . of my mother and sisters. . . ."

A few days after this conversation Chopin heard a ring at the door which he recognized as Miss Stirling's. He went to open it, and found her with a basket in her hands and a little girl of about eleven at her side. Directly she saw him she put down the basket and caught his hands in hers.

"Ah, M. Chopin," she cried, "you ought not to have come out to answer the bell—that is the way to catch a cold, you know—leaving your warm sitting-room for the draughty hall."

"Well, well," he laughed, "come in—I knew it was you, you see . . ."

The little girl, at a sign from Miss Stirling, picked up the basket, and all three went into the drawing-room.

"Won't you present me to Mademoiselle?" he said smiling, as he fetched chairs for them.

"It is Annie Thackeray," said Miss Stirling, "the daughter of Mr. Thackeray, an English novelist—she is staying in Paris with her grandmother."

"Mr. Thackeray? Didn't I meet him in London at Mrs. Sartoris'? . . . Bonjour, Mlle Annie . . ." Thinking she looked very shy and would be the happier for being left alone, he turned back to Miss Stirling.

"How are you?" She was looking at him anxiously and her voice shook.

"Pretty well, thank you."

"How are you sleeping?"

"Not very well, I'm afraid."

"Your appetite?"

"Not up to much . . . I have done a little composing . . ." he was anxious to get away from this wearisome topic of health. "Should you like to hear it?"

"Of course I would," she answered quickly. "I would dearly like to hear it; but it will tire you to play—it cannot be good for you."

He smiled and went to the piano—it was a mazurka he had been working at—he did not know if it was right—he was not sure, now, as he used to be, and he had no longer the strength to go on and on at his pieces until he was satisfied that every note was what it should be; he looked anxiously round as he played to see what effect he was having on his audience. The little girl's face was very serious and her big round eyes stared first at him and then at Miss Stirling. Miss Stirling herself was listening with the rapt expression she always wore when he played . . . presently he noticed that tears were coming down her cheeks, her face was still and calm, but the tears welled up in her eyes and poured down in a stream. At last he stopped; instantly she was up, beside him, speaking

eagerly, and letting the tears dry unnoticed on her cheeks.

"You mustn't play any more," she said, "no more, no more, it's too beautiful. Ah, you are indeed the rarest, most exquisite of players, and it is too kind, too good of you to play to me like this . . . I . . . can't tell you how I . . . come, Annie, we must go. . . ."

She was agitated; he wondered vaguely why—but he scarcely felt able to deal with emotions, and was hardly sorry she should go. At the door she turned back and almost whispered:

"I have brought you some of that jelly, and my sister sent some of the wine you fancied the other day; pray, pray, try to take a little."

So that was the basket! More of these absurd attentions and fussing over him. He suppressed a groan, but shook his head at her.

"It is very wrong; you shouldn't bring me these things," he said. "I won't play to you if you do."

But she pushed him back gently and shut the drawing-room door.

Tired with his playing he leant up against it and suddenly became aware that his guests were still standing in the little hall outside.

"Never forget, Annie," he heard Miss Stirling say to the child, "never forget that you have heard Chopin play."

III

ONE of the greatest causes of anxiety amongst Chopin's friends was his lack of money. He had never managed to save anything ; the money he had made in England was soon gone, and then, unable to teach, give concerts, or compose, how was he to live ? Franchomme, Gutmann and Grzymala held endless consultations and were for ever trying new expedients—spending their own money, putting off the payment of the rent, persuading tradesmen not to send in their accounts—but it was obvious that this could not go on for ever. At last Gutmann suggested that Grzymala should hint to Miss Stirling the true state of affairs and trust to her generosity to give some help. The plan was carried out, and the friends waited eagerly . . . alas, nothing was heard from Miss Stirling and they were obliged to give up hope in this direction.

In the summer the rooms in the Square d'Orléans became unbearably hot and stuffy. Gutmann found an apartment in the Rue Chaillot, in a more suitable neighbourhood, airy and cool. A Russian lady admirer of Chopin agreed to take them and sub-let them to him at half the rent, and when he, vague though he was over money matters, commented on their cheapness, his friends told him that rents were low in the summer season.

The situation was, however, becoming impossible ; and at last Franchomme went off to Miss Stirling, declaring that he should make a last attempt and ask her openly to lend some money to tide over present difficulties, while he wrote to Louise Jedrzejwicz and laid the matter before her.

At his first word Miss Stirling started back in horrified amazement.

"In financial trouble! . . . But M. Franchomme, I don't understand . . . When M. Grzymala came—but that was months ago—let me see—in March—I sent him something. . . ."

"Possibly," suggested Franchomme, "he has already spent it—though I can't think why he didn't tell us. . . ."

"Spent it! Oh, no . . . it was quite a substantial sum . . . I don't at all understand what can have happened. . . ."

"Might I ask," said Franchomme, more and more puzzled, "how much it was, and how you sent it?"

"It was—it was a thousand pounds—25,000 francs. I made twenty-five thousand franc notes into a small parcel and sealed it up and gave it to a commissionaire to take to the Square d'Orléans. . . . What can have become of it?"

"Good Heavens!" Franchomme was completely staggered by her generosity, and lack of business method. "Twenty-five thousand francs—you gave them like that to a commissionaire and don't even know if he has delivered them! Did you hear anything from Chopin? No . . ."

"No." Miss Stirling hung her head. She was aware she had behaved foolishly. "But I thought—he is so sensitive about these things, you know . . . and . . . and I don't believe I put anything in to show who had sent it. . . . I was afraid he might be angry, and send it back. . . ." She looked up now rather piteously at Franchomme.

A wave of pity came over him—pity curiously blended with admiration. Here was real devotion, he thought, a real desire to be of use, no mere hope of buying gratitude, or cutting a generous figure, but a disinterestedness whose only fear was lest discovery should mean the rejection of the offering.

"I see," he said; and paused to think. "I am pretty confident, however, that it never reached him. I think—I am afraid, Mademoiselle, that we shall have to ask him about it now, for we cannot leave that parcel untraced."

Miss Stirling blushed a vivid crimson and began to stammer.

"No, no . . . I can't . . . he would be angry with me . . . I could not . . . don't tell him, don't tell him, M. Franchomme." She was almost crying, and nothing was left to Franchomme but to try to comfort her, and to promise he would say nothing for the present—she should think it over.

He went away in great perplexity. But the next morning a letter from Mrs. Erskine reassured him. Mrs. Erskine had persuaded her sister that the question must be investigated and the truth revealed, but it had been agreed between them that Chopin should be led to suppose that the present came from Mrs. Erskine and not from Miss Stirling. Franchomme smiled. To him it was a matter of perfect indifference which of the ladies was to take the part of heroine, so long as the money was recovered and Chopin put at ease. The first thing to do was undoubtedly to make sure whether it had or had not been received, and he presented himself, as soon as possible, at the Rue Chaillot.

He began cautiously, with a great wish to be very tactful, assuming that Chopin had plenty of money for the rent of the house in the Square d'Orléans already overdue. Chopin interrupted him crossly.

"I! Money!" he exclaimed. "I have nothing. And who knows that better than you, Franchomme?"

"But the 25,000 francs that were sent you lately?"

Chopin stared, as if he thought his friend had gone mad.

"Twenty-five thousand francs? *What* twenty-five

thousand francs ? Who sent me such a sum ? I have not received a sou."

" You are quite sure ? Mrs. Erskine sent them by a messenger—a long time ago—in March—but I told her I was sure you had not received them—we must try to find out what has become of them."

Chopin flung up his hands in amazement at the tale, and declared he must see Mrs. Erskine. He had never heard such a story in his life—either Mrs. Erskine was suffering from hallucinations, or the messenger was a thief, or Mme Etienne, the *concierge* at the Square d'Orléans was dishonest, or he himself was a lunatic suffering from incredible attacks of loss of memory. He was, as Miss Stirling had anticipated, none too pleased at the idea of taking such a present from his Scotch women, and when Mrs. Erskine arrived, quite sure the commissionaire had delivered the packet to Mme Etienne, though admitting he had not asked her for a receipt, he greeted her with a good deal of petulance.

" But what made you think I should accept such a sum of money ? Twenty-five thousand francs ! Why should you give me fifty centimes ? "

Mrs. Erskine found it difficult to say. She mumbled that it was nothing—she and her sister would never miss it.

" Not miss it ! Absurd ! You would have to be the Queen of England before I would consent to take such a princely gift from you ! "

Mrs. Erskine was agitated and distressed—she felt that she was betraying Jane—she must soothe him, and convince him that he could accept the money without loss of dignity . . . she leant forward and spoke very earnestly.

" I beg of you not to think of it like that . . . after all, your gifts to us have been more than princely—they have been the gifts of genius—and if just now, owing to your health, you are temporarily in a diffi-

culty, why should you not take a few pounds from us, who will never know the lack of it? Between friends, M. Chopin, surely . . . ? ”

She could not go on but looked at him entreatingly.

“ A few pounds ! ” he exclaimed. “ However, it is useless to discuss that any more until it has been found.” And Mrs. Erskine could but agree, and in some agitation withdraw, assuring him she would let him know further developments.

The next day she returned with a strange tale. There was at that time in Paris a well-known sooth-sayer of the name of Alexis. To him the commissionaire had insisted on going to enquire as to the whereabouts of the lost package. After a good many questions Alexis informed him that in March, on a Thursday, he had taken an important parcel to a house in the Square d’Orléans, and given it to a tall woman standing in a dark room, which was to be reached by going down two steps. All this—which had indeed been for the most part told Alexis by the commissionaire himself—was admitted to be true, and the clairvoyant was begged to reveal further where this valuable package now was. This Alexis regretted he could do only if a lock of hair belonging to the person who received the package was placed in his hands.

Such a tale appealed very well to Chopin’s Polish superstitions. He at once sent a messenger to fetch Mme Etienne from the Square d’Orléans, under the pretext that he wanted a book from his rooms. While she was coming he concocted a little comedy with Mrs. Erskine by means of which Mme Etienne was to be persuaded to give up a lock of her hair.

After thanking the concierge for coming so quickly he asked her if she had ever heard of Alexis, the clairvoyant. Mme Etienne immediately reeled forth a tale of her husband’s brother-in-law, who worked in a bakery, and whose employer . . .

“ Really ! ” said Chopin, when the story at last was

done. "But here is Mrs. Erskine who maintains that he can actually cure patients, merely by holding a piece of their hair in his hands!"

"Indeed!" cried Mme Etienne, "and will not Monsieur send some of his hair to be cured?"

"You believe then that he can perform such a miracle?" replied Chopin. "Well, if he could prove to me that he knew a woman's hair from a man's, or a sick person's from a healthy one's, I might be tempted to try."

"If that is all," said Mme Etienne, falling eagerly into the trap that had been prepared for her, "pray take a lock of my hair, and we shall soon see if the magician can do that, and if he can, perhaps he will cure you, for you look ill enough, *mon pauvre Monsieur*."

Alexis, whether he could cure consumption or not, succeeded in unravelling the mystery of the package. He told the commissionaire that it was still in the hands of the woman to whom it had been given and that if he asked for it tactfully he would get it back. The tact consisted in reminding Mme Etienne of the day in March on which he had brought a small parcel for M. Chopin. Mme Etienne immediately recognized the man and remembered the episode; she had, she declared, entirely forgotten all about the parcel till that moment—it was still intact behind the clock in her little room where she had put it on first receiving it.

"And now, dear friend," said Mrs. Erskine, when they had broken the seal and counted the twenty-five notes, "you will not be so very unkind as to refuse them? It will be for us to be grateful if you will only consent to show us this great mark of friendship. . . ."

He looked at her with such a beautiful smile that she felt a thief—"It is for Jane," she thought; "why is she not here?"

"I cannot refuse you if you speak like that," he

said, "I cannot tell you what I feel at your generosity and kindness—they are beyond words. . . . But, my dear friend, I will only take half . . ." and as she began to protest he put his hand on her lips—"More will not be necessary," he said, very gently. "By the time this is spent I shall be able to earn more—or I shall need nothing. . . ."

IV

HE was becoming more and more sure that this was true. He wrote to Louise and begged her to come to him if possible—she must come with her husband and her little girl—the Czar was in Warsaw—she could perhaps get permission from him direct. Of course he no longer had a personal connection with the Court—it was hardly likely that Nicolas would remember him personally, but he might recall the name . . . Frederic thought of the fierce, ugly, half-mad Archduke who had been so fond of him . . . of Alexander and the diamond ring . . . of the oppression and bloodshed of the Muscovites, and then, with a burst of yearning, of Louise. He longed for her like a frightened child—he seemed now to care only for his family and the friends of his youth, and when the faithful Gutmann asked if he would mind his going out of Paris for a few months, told him rather brutally that he did not mind in the least—it made not the smallest difference.

Towards the end of the summer Louise, Kalasanty and the little Louise arrived in Paris. Titus Woyciechowski, guessing at the condition of affairs, made a great effort to reach him, but did not succeed in getting further than Brussels—permission to visit Paris was coldly refused the former insurgent. For days Chopin,

stirred by the sight of Louise to a passionate longing for Titus, nursed the hope of going himself to Brussels—alas, it was all too clear that such a journey was quite beyond his strength, and he was obliged to suffer this unnecessary, miserable disappointment, which a word from an official could have annihilated.

For some time talking had been very painful to him, but he liked being read aloud to. The younger brother of one of his pupils, Charles Gavard, came regularly for this purpose, and Chopin, anxious not to depress his young visitor, selected for their reading Voltaire's *Dictionnaire Philosophique*. After the arrival of the Jedrzejewicz he might not have remained so dependent on young Gavard, but the boy had become so attached to him that he continued his visits and attentions until he made himself indispensable in the sick-room.

Solange, again the mother of a little girl, was in Paris, and also a constant visitor. Whether it was that her misfortunes were having a softening effect upon her, or that her affection for Chopin had always been genuine even if jealous and egotistical, she felt severely the thought of his approaching loss, and visited him constantly. Her mention of his condition in her letters to her mother resulted in George Sand writing to Louise somewhat formally perhaps, but anxiously, and begging for genuine information as to whether Chopin were really seriously worse, or only in his usual condition of ill-health. Louise, without saying anything of the letter to her brother, wrote, formally on her side, to tell Mme Sand that Frederic was seriously ill.

All through September he was getting weaker and weaker. He was in continual pain, and it was very difficult for him to get any sleep. Soon he could not raise himself in bed, and finding it more comfortable to be in a sitting position, spent most of the time propped up by a great pile of pillows. One morning

Louise, who never left him for long, brought in Doctor Cruveillé to make his daily examination. Chopin, without speaking, watched the Doctor moving up and down the room. At last, when he approached the bed and took the patient's wrist between his fingers, Chopin put his other hand over the Doctor's and said in a clearer, firmer voice than Louise had heard from him for days :

"Now my death struggle is beginning."

Louise stood still, petrified with horror ; Doctor Cruveillé, after a moment of shocked silence, began soothingly :

"Come, come, Monsieur, you must not give up hope yet—there is no need for that. . . ."

"You are mistaken," replied Chopin calmly and with the touch of dignity so characteristic of him. "It is a rare favour when a man has revealed to him the moment when death approaches. This favour God has granted me ; do not disturb me."

The Doctor shook his head, and mumbled to Louise that it was a pity he should be so depressed. Louise made no answer ; she did not think he was depressed or that the thought of death had any fears or regrets for him. He was very tired.

The news of his condition soon spread amongst his Parisian friends and there were constant visitors to enquire how he was, to beg to see him for a few moments, or to offer their services to the nurses. The sitting-room was often half-full of ladies waiting for the latest news ; Mrs. Erskine and Miss Stirling hardly left it, except to do some message for Mme Jedrzejewicz. Princess Marcelline Czartoryska came every day, and sat with him for an hour or two ; the Abbé Jelowicki held himself ready to administer the last rites of the Church. Countess Delphine Potocka was away in the South of France, and at last Louise wrote both to her and Gutmann, to tell them that if they wished to see Frederic again they must return at once.

One afternoon Franchomme, who shared with Louise the main work of the nursing, was asked to come out to speak to a lady—she would not give her name but merely asked urgently for M. Franchomme.

He went out; she was not in the drawing-room and he passed on to the ante-room. George Sand was there alone. She did not say anything, but as she held out her hands all her person was a question.

"He is dying," Franchomme answered her; and the blunt words seemed to make her wince.

"How long do you think . . . ?" she could not finish the sentence, her throat was so dry, and she had to swallow.

"I have no idea—but I think not more than a day or two—he is quite conscious and in a good deal of pain."

She gave a gasping sigh, and looked down; then she spoke hurriedly, in eager, agitated tones:

"Do you think—would it be possible—if I might see him—only for a few moments. . . ." She looked up at him, her large black eyes larger than ever, and with an unusual brightness in them—the brightness of tears.

But Franchomme did not feel at all sympathetic. "It is all very well," he said to himself, "to kill him by her cruelty, and then come and shed crocodile tears in his death-chamber . . ." and aloud, "I am afraid, Madame, that is quite out of the question—I could not answer for the consequences if he were to go through any emotion now."

She sighed.

"You would not . . ." her voice was hesitating—tentative—"You would not tell him I am here—ask him if he would care—let *him* decide . . . ?"

"Impossible." Franchomme was annoyed at her persistence and spoke coldly. "He is in no state to decide. His friends must act for him. And I may perhaps remind you, Madame, that even your name is painfully likely to agitate him."

She looked away from him, and again sighed deeply.

"Well," she said at last, very gently, "you may be right. God knows I would not do anything to hurt him . . ." and without looking again at Franchomme she turned away and went out of the room.

V

THE attacks of breathlessness succeeded each other with increasing swiftness. A new and agonizing symptom was the cramp which seized him in the hands and feet, and for which the doctors could suggest no remedy or even alleviation. His sufferings were now so acute that Louise could only hope that the end was not far off—the sight of his convulsed features, the sound of his groans, rent her heart. He still, however, had moments in which he was easier, and could smile at Solange or whisper a few words to Princess Marcelline. In one of these intervals Gavard came to his side and told him that Countess Delphine Potocka had arrived—did Chopin wish to see her?

He nodded his head eagerly; and through the folding doors she slipped—lovely, exquisitely dressed, her white hands stretched towards him, her dark eyes full of tears, a perfect vision of beauty and grief. Countess Delphine . . . he had known her so long . . . she was associated in his mind with such happy dreams of youth—music—love . . . she seemed to him then, as his tired eyes rested on her slim undulating figure, like a picture of his old beloved Poland—was she real—a woman of flesh and blood—or a vision—an incarnation of his childish ideals. . . ?

She knelt beside his bed, and the touch of her cool hands on his hot, dry ones brought him to a sense of

her reality. Instinctively he began to whisper a compliment :

"It was for this then that I have been keeping alive—I was to be given this great pleasure of seeing you again."

"I wish I could have been here earlier," she replied, "but it was a long journey I had to make—a very long journey. . . ."

He smiled understandingly ; and then after a pause :

"Are you tired ? Or would you sing to me ? Once more. . . ."

"Of course I will sing if you wish it," she replied quickly, her voice shaking a little ; and then turning to Franchomme :

"How can we manage ? What shall we do about the piano ? "

"The piano is so near the door between the rooms," he replied, "I think if you stood on the threshold it would do very well," and while he and Gavard went to see that all was right and push the instrument a little more forward, she bent over the dying man and asked :

"What shall I sing ? "

"The air . . . you know . . . from *Beatrice di Tenda*. . . ."

She nodded ; and finding Princess Marcelline in the drawing-room, secured her to play the accompaniment.

The purity of the notes, the elegant curve of Bellini's melody, the delicate embellishments so well selected, so perfectly executed, brought him a faint, pure satisfaction which at that moment perhaps nothing else could have given him. . . . But alas, before the last notes had died away his chains were galling him again . . . a violent attack of coughing, tearing, shattering his whole frame, made the Countess stop and draw back from the door which Gavard hastily shut, while Franchomme and Louise supported him, wiped his face, held restoratives to his lips.

The attack left him exhausted and miserable ; but a few hours later he received the best kind of stimulant in the appearance of Gutmann, who, like Countess Delphine, had hurried back on hearing from Louise. Though Chopin may have spoken crossly when he parted from his pupil he was unfeignedly glad to have him back again, and Gutmann, who was a big powerful fellow, was able to prove his value by holding him in his arms more comfortably than Franchomme, more firmly and securely than the pillows.

A night in that strong support gave him a better rest than he had had for some time. Franchomme coming in in the morning was surprised at the vigour with which he spoke and moved, praising Gutmann, and telling him that Franchomme was as pleased as he was at being able to get a night's sleep. Presently however a shade crossed his face, and on Franchomme bending down to ask if anything was wrong—if he wanted anything—the gasping whisper replied :

“No . . . only I was thinking . . . George has quite abandoned me . . . she has never been to see me . . . though she promised, long ago, that I should die in her arms. . . .” He began to gasp and pant for breath, and Franchomme, who had hesitated for a moment at the first words, now resolved to remain firm. If the mere thought of her could upset him so, it would be fatal to let him see her, and dangerous to tell him that she had been in his rooms.

All that day his mind was full of her—once or twice he fancied he was at Majorca, and when Solange bent over him he was not quite sure . . . was it George ?—but she spoke, and he knew that it was not she, and that he was lonely, and deserted. When Princess Marcelline came, he brought himself back to the present with an effort.

“To-day it is good-bye, I think,” he whispered, and for a moment she turned her head away. He held her hand in one of his and with the other beckoned to

Franchomme. "I recommend Franchomme to you, Princess," he continued, "*vous jouerez du Mozart en mémoire de moi.*" He closed his eyes for a moment, tired by his effort, but presently opened them again.

"The Abbé . . . is he there? I should like the sacraments . . . to-day will be the end."

And so the last offices of the Church were performed, and hour by hour, minute by minute, he slipped further away. Gutmann held him for most of the day.

"Is he not tired?" whispered Chopin when for a moment his pupil left him to Franchomme, but he was evidently more comfortable when Gutmann returned, and when the cramp in his hands seized him, Gutmann's touch on his wrists seemed an alleviation. Night drew on and he grew obviously worse. None of those who most loved him dared now to leave the room, for they felt the end might come at any moment. A terrible fit of coughing alarmed them, but he still lived, was still conscious, for when Gutmann held some water to his lips he drank, pressed his lips on Gutmann's hand and breathed "*Cher ami.*"

When the doctors came at night he was already gasping—he hardly seemed to retain any life. Dr. Cruveillé took a candle and held it in front of his face—to the horror of the watchers it was quite black—it was obvious that he was suffocating.

"He must be unconscious," said Cruveillé, seeing the agony on Louise's face, and as if to reassure her he bent down and said very gently, "Are you in pain?"

There was a pause; then in a thread of sound—faint, but quite distinct, they heard, "*Plus.*"

It was his last word; in the early hours of the morning, between three and four, he died.

All day long flowers had been arriving. Franchomme stayed to receive them and arrange them round the bed. In the evening, after he had gone, there came

another ring at the bell, and Louise went to answer it. On the threshold stood Miss Stirling, holding a bunch of violets. Louise, looking at her in the dim twilight, thought :

"How haggard—how old she looks. . . . Won't you come in?" she said aloud, holding out her hand.

"Thank you," said Miss Stirling, "I thought perhaps I might venture to come . . . I sent a wreath, but I brought these violets, too—he loved the scent of violets so much. . . ."

Louise said nothing, but opened the bedroom door and, surmounting a slight reluctance, left her alone with Frederic.

The room was like a garden. Roses, carnations, chrysanthemums, lilies, were heaped in a hugh bank around him, and from the midst shone out his face. Miss Stirling gazed in astonishment; when he was alive she had never seen him look like this—so young, so serene, so pure, yet with a touch of grandeur . . . the loveliness had something godlike about it. . . .

At last she must leave him. . . .

She went back into the sitting-room, where Louise was already beginning to arrange the manuscripts and letters, and to go through the drawers, all kept tidy and carefully labelled.

"I wonder, dear Madame Jedrzejewicz," she said, hesitatingly, "if you would allow me to help you with that . . . I think I know something about some of the manuscripts—and you look so tired."

"Thank you," said Louise, "that is like your kindness . . . I am putting all his letters about music here, and the private letters there. If you would not mind going through that desk. . . ."

They worked in silence for some time. Suddenly Louise gave an exclamation. Miss Stirling looked up and saw her holding a silver goblet.

"Look," she said, half smiling, half crying, "it is the goblet full of Polish earth that they gave him

when he left Poland for the last time. . . . Ah, poor Frycek . . . how he loved Poland . . . it shall be thrown over him at the end, this well-loved earth . . .” and she began to cry outright.

“Will you look at these?” said Miss Stirling, quickly, to distract her attention. “I think they must be something special, for they and a dead rose are all tied together with a pink ribbon, and there are some words on the paper that goes round them, in his writing, in Polish.”

Louise took the little packet and glanced at the contents.

“Yes,” she said, with a deep sigh, “these are the letters from Marie Wodzinska and her mother . . . the rose must have been given him by Marie.”

“And these words?” Miss Stirling could not help asking.

“*Moja biéda*—My sorrow.”

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